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[FOILED.]

AILEEN'S LOVE STORY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Christine's Revenge; or, O'Hara's Wife,"

"The Mystery of His Love," &c., &c.

CHAPTER VII.

FOILED.

A villain with a smiling cheek
Is like a goodly apple
Rotten at the core.

SHAKESPEARE.

AILEEN'S heart failed her for a moment when she found herself alone in that darkness in the grim yet splendid Castle of Athlone. She knew that she was in a long, ghostly corridor, with a locked door at each end. Dead walls were on either side of her—thick walls she felt and knew they were by instinct. She rapped against them, and called out:

"Help! Please let me out—let me out! Help!"

But only the echoes of her own voice answered her.

"Arrah! and what have I done that I am to be punished like a thief; locked up here as if it was my fault that the boys are seeking the lives of the Athlones. What will they do to me at all, at all? If they bring me up for a witness, they shall cut out my tongue before it shall speak a word against any of those I know."

For it never struck Aileen that Lord Athlone

might be the author of this piece of cruelty and mischief. All at once the door at the opposite end of the passage to the one by which she had entered it burst open with a loud noise, and a blaze of light met her eyes.

For a moment she was dazzled by the sudden brightness, and obliged to hide her bewildered eyes from the glare, but soon she was able to look up, and then she saw a staircase carpeted with crimson velvet pile and a winding balustrade of black carved oak, and walls all painted in panels representing verdant landscapes. From sconces in the walls came forth brilliant light. In each was fixed a lamp, which cast a soft radiance on staircase, panels, and carvings.

"It's like a scene in Fairyland," said Aileen to herself. "How beautiful it all is."

And she contrasted it in her own mind with the raftered kitchen at Kilallen Farm, with its dresser, its clock, its wooden chairs, its rude fireplace, and then her little bare, whitewashed room upstairs.

"What have I in common with all this splendour?" she asked herself. "It seems a mockery to show it to me."

Then she paused and wondered who would come to help her and show her to the outside of the castle. All that the girl wanted now was to get home. Once outside the great house of Athlone and she would not fear.

The winds, the whirling snowstorm, or the fierce men who prowled about the gates of the lordly dwelling, their hands on their revolvers, their eyes eagerly searching the faces of the passers by, looking out for the hated men of the hated name, Aileen would fear none of these. She advanced towards the light space, looking now eagerly for some human face, listening for

the welcome sound of some human voice, and then she saw a figure on the stairs. It was that of the dwarfish man-servant who had led her into the passage and deserted her there in the darkness, shutting the door so loudly after him. The man made a sign to her to advance. She came on trembling with eagerness.

"Let me out, please?" she began. "I have been so frightened."

"Come on, if you please," said the man; "the countess wants to speak to you."

"It is to ask me questions. I will die sooner than answer," said Aileen to herself.

Nevertheless she went on and passed up the splendid staircase to the first landing, a stately place with statues and flowering shrubs and doors of carved oak. One of these the man opened and stood aside, pointing with his finger.

"Her ladyship is in the next room but one," he said, softly. "Will you walk through the suite?"

Aileen found that the room she had entered was in comparative gloom, being lighted only by a large glowing but flameless fire. Her feet sank into the soft, mossy carpet. She could see couches and cabinets and pictures against the walls. She went into the next room. It was paved with marble, and the walls were frescoed and the furniture was of an Eastern type—silk ottomans and lounges.

It was a lofty room, lighted from the roof, then Aileen passed into the third room. It was comparatively small, but furnished with a reckless profusion of rare and costly and beautiful things. Aileen could hardly believe that she was on earth when she looked round this wonderful room.

There was a fernery and a fountain at one end, and the luminous rays of several silver lamps fell upon a Persian carpet of the most gorgeous dyes, and couches and chairs of pale green velvet framed in gold. The walls were of polished oak, with here and there a panel let in, painted either by or after Watteau—lovely landscapes, lordly cavaliers, and beautiful Court ladies dressed as shepherdesses.

Aileen looked around in some alarm expecting to see the countess, when suddenly a low, soft laugh broke on her ear; but it was not a woman's laugh. The next moment Lord Athlone walked forth from the fernery. He wore a long, rich dressing-gown and a gorgeous smoking-cap. He was smoking a cigar, which he put down on an inlaid table, and he said, softly:

"It was I wanted you, pretty Aileen, not my mother, the countess."

"And for what would you be wanting me, my lord?" asked Aileen, almost suspicious, and on her guard, and yet not fully recognising the meaning of the young lord.

"Well, look here, Aileen. I don't pretend to be a good man. I am not a bad sort of fellow though, and I have taken an awful fancy to you. I could almost wish that I were a farmer's son, or you were an earl's daughter, that I might marry you."

"Arrah, my lord, but I am—" she paused—"a poor orphan—a pensioner on humble folks. I will have to go out to service when we are turned out of Kilmallen, and I am too ignorant of the ways of you great folks to be fit even to be an under servant in this fine house, and so, please, don't speak nonsense to me."

She spoke with a certain decision which astonished Lord Athlone.

"Nonsense!" he echoed, petulantly. "My good girl, don't talk trash, if you please; I have made up my mind that you and I are to be great friends."

"But I have not, my lord, thanking you all the same; there can be no friendship, my lord, between us two. I am a poor country girl, ignorant, and I belong to the class whom you and yours oppress."

"You are a charming little rogue, Aileen," Lord Athlone answered, with a languid drawl. "But, of course, you know what I mean when I tell you that I think you the sweetest little thing in the world. A wild rose by the wayside, lovelier and fresher than any rare hot-house blossom, or fine garden flower with a Latin name and a long pedigree. Yes, Aileen, I am as much in love with you at first sight as over a fellow was with a girl since the world was made."

Aileen Moore had a quick brain, and for one in her station she had read much, and was very fairly cultured in mind. She spoke in a general way, in the idiom of her native land, but she could, when she liked, use more conventional language. She was a deep thinker for one so young, innocent as a child, free from the very thought of evil, as are most of the daughters of Erin, where the old song states that all the men are brave and true, and all the women fair and chaste.

But if Aileen were innocent she was not ignorant; she had heard enough to understand that this gay nobleman was offering to her a decided insult, and she determined to retaliate. She was no longer afraid. A new spirit awoke in her. She drew herself up to her full height. She still wore her shabby everyday working garb, the grey linsey skirt and dark jacket, the little woollen shawl crossed over her breast and tied behind, her hood was still on her head, but she looked like a lovely spirit of the mountain land, with her blooming complexion and glorious eyes and ruddy lip curled in a species of merry scorn.

Lord Athlone, who, young as he was, had already drained the cup of pleasure to the dregs, who knew every phase of fast and fashionable London life—Lord Athlone, who was the pet of actresses and countesses alike, the loungeur of the clubs, the devoted slave of every succeeding reigning beauty of the season, could not under-

stand the flashing eyes and mocking smile of this enchanting little devil, as he called her in his heart. He adjusted his eyeglass and he stared at her in surprise.

"Och, thin, and it's sorry I am I can't accept your lordship's offer, nor feel as grateful for it as I ought to do," she said, with provoking emphasis and calmness. "It's a great offer entirely you're making me, my Lord Athlone, but poor as I am, I have made up my mind never to marry except for love, and I could never love your lordship if I were to try for ever. It would be a great thing certainly to be my Lady Athlone, and I don't doubt but I could learn to behave myself as became my state, for I have patience, and I am a good mimic, so that I sometimes think if all other things failed I would try and get a place at a theatre and act for my living, but I wouldn't marry you, my lord, not if you covered me with diamonds and crowned me Queen of Ireland to-morrow."

Lord Athlone felt stung to the quick, the rejection of this pretty peasant was so very emphatic and uncompromising. Meanwhile, the blasé young lord was quick of apprehension as Aileen herself. He perfectly understood that she was mocking him; that she knew that he never even dreamt of marrying her, but he also understood that even had he made her an offer of marriage that she would have refused him. He saw that she hated him, and a spirit of devilry sprang out of the road's wounded vanity.

"By George!" he said to himself, "I'll conquer her—I'll humble her. She shall bite the dust and kneel at my feet before a month is over, and then—what shall I do then? Turn her adrift, most likely, or send her over to London and find some situation for her. She might keep a refreshment stall at one of the theatres. Yes, my lady, I have you safe and I don't exactly mean to let you escape."

"My good girl," said Lord Athlone, putting down his cigar which he had taken up and smoked while Aileen was making her little speech. "My good girl," the nobleman folded his white jewelled hands and smiled calmly. "You did not suppose I meant to marry you. You must be crazy, my good child."

"Oh, no, my lord, not at all, at all. I was puzzled, though when you said you had fallen in love with me, I see now you were making fun."

And Aileen laughed a mocking, silvery laugh. "No, I wasn't making fun," Lord Athlone answered. "I want you to become my chère amie, but there, you don't understand French."

"But it's myself that can read it a little," replied the girl, "for good Father Byrne has taught me, and I know the words do mean a dear friend, but it's in a bad sense I'm thinking, and, indeed, my Lord Athlone, I see that you are offering me a deadly insult. I would not marry you, and for anything else I would sooner kill myself, or you—"

"Ah, my dear Aileen, you and your dear friends in the bogs and the mud cabins are fond of that sport, shooting the landlords, but I've come among you to imprison and hang a few of you and teach you a little patience in your adversities."

"Does your lordship mean to begin by hanging me?" asked Aileen, bitterly.

"No, not exactly, but you must know that you are in the power of the law. You come here with my brother, the Hon. Edward Athlone, disguised in a cloak of your mother's. You are obliged to walk with him over the Common to prevent him from being shot like a dog. Now, you must be a species of accomplice with these ruffians, and as my father is a magistrate of the county he can commit you to gaol unless you name the guilty parties."

"I don't know a word," said Aileen, doggedly. "As for sending me to prison, I'll go and welcome. There's nothing I should like better. I am not afraid of hardships. My lord, I'm used to them. They are my element."

"You are a deuced pretty girl," responded Lord Athlone, still looking hard at Aileen through his eyeglass, "and clever too. A very little instruction would make you fascinating

enough to become the rage of London, and you might have a villa and servants and carriages and velvet dresses, and heaven knows what, besides Dresden and diamonds and poodle dogs, and all the thousand and one things that women value, but it seems you prefer a stone cell and a straw pallet, do you?"

"Aye, my lord, for I should lie down on the straw pallet with an innocent heart, and your diamonds would scorch me with their wicked brightness. They would seem like beacon lights round the bottomless pit. I think of a world beyond this one, my lord."

"Saintly, are you?" responded my lord, with a scoffing laugh. "Saintly, but not averse to having a man shot from behind a hedge when he was not looking. Look here, Aileen, you are in my power and I mean to use it. This part of the castle is mine; that corridor shuts off my apartments from the rest of the house. Only my own people are about me. If you were to scream yourself into fits not a soul would hear you that would attend to you. You must make up your mind to the programme I have sketched out for you. It is useless to struggle with the inevitable. I don't mean to send you to prison. Hello!"

He paused in angry rage. He heard the footsteps of a man crossing the marble floor of the next room with impatient strides. The next moment Edward Athlone and his brother Lord Richard were face to face. Edward was white as death, and his eyes blazing, but he did not speak. He only stared at his brother in a most peevish and searching fashion. Lord Athlone folded his arms and said haughtily:

"I did not ask you here. I thought you quite understood that I do not like anybody to intrude here uninvited."

"I quite understand that when one commits a felony one does not wish for witnesses."

"Thank you, good brother. Now, then, perhaps you will have the common sense to walk out. There is the door."

And he pointed towards it.

"My Lord Athlone, I see the door and I will at once leave your rooms, but Aileen must come also."

"We will soon settle that."

As Lord Athlone spoke he raised and rang a silver hand bell that stood near him, and two strong, tall servants in plain clothes came from an inner room.

"Take that girl," said Lord Athlone, pointing to Aileen, "and lock her in the blue room."

In a moment Edward Athlone stood before the two men with clenched fists, which he held close to their faces.

"Cowards," said he, "if you dare to lay a finger on that girl I will pound you to powder."

He was a violent man was this handsome Edward Athlone when once his passion was aroused, but it took a vast deal to rouse it, and this the serving men knew well, for Edward had the reputation of being the most easy tempered young gentleman in the world, but he was enormously strong, and the men shrank back instinctively. They both felt that they had been asked to do a cowardly and cruel deed.

"Remove that girl and lock her up in the blue room," thundered Lord Athlone. "I will have this insolent girl tried in the magistrates' room and sent to prison as the accomplice of the seditious rebels of the county."

"And I say that I shall send her home this very night under safe escort from the castle," said Edward. "I have made up my mind."

"And so have I," cried Lord Athlone. "I would rather knock you flat upon the ground than you should interfere with me," the young lord added, with an oath, and then he turned and Edward doubled his fists, and looked defiantly at his brother.

"I would proclaim the whole story from the housetops if you attempted to carry out even a part of your infamous plan," cried Edward. "I would bear witness of your villany in every town in the kingdom. I would make your name a hissing and a byword in every house. For shame, Lord Athlone, allow this girl to leave your rooms and to return home."

Lord Athlone felt in his own heart that the game was up; that with that uncompromising, fierce and fearless brother to deal with, it would be quite impossible to detain Aileen as a prisoner in the Castle of Athlone.

"Only if I let her go now," he said to himself, "I will have her again some time when she last expects it. I will shut her up at Dalgelly, my own shooting box, and there I'll keep her as long as I like. I don't care if I kill her, but conquer her I will, the insolent jade!"

Then the young lord burst into a loud and apparently hearty laugh, and sank upon one of the soft velvet couches that were near him.

"What an idiot you are, Ted!" he exclaimed, "not to see that the whole affair springs from my love of justice first, and secondly my love of a joke. The facts are simply these: I was horribly annoyed when I heard that those wretches wanted to shoot you, and I was furious when I heard that some pretty jade had asked you to accept of her escort, because I knew perfectly it was nothing but a trick to extract money, and that when you or my mother had given her five pounds or so for saving your life she would set her lovers or brothers on to shoot you from behind a hedge on the first convenient opportunity, so I resolved to make an example of her, give her a good fright, lock her up for the night, and get her ten days or a month's hard labour in the magistrates room in the castle to-morrow, but since you choose to believe in the jade—well, take her away with you. Perhaps she will listen to a love story if you tell her one. Ha! ha! ha!"

But while Lord Athlone laughed, he was white as a corpse with suppressed passion, and his brother, who knew him well, shuddered when he thought of the revenge he might take if not upon Aileen herself, still upon her friends and adopted brothers.

"Come, Aileen," he said, softly, "I am going to send you home now at once."

Aileen went towards this handsome, manly Athlone with a light step and a bounding heart. To her quick imagination the two brothers seemed to represent the two extremes of good and evil, light and darkness. She went along clinging to the strong, protecting arm of the younger brother, but the loud mocking laughter of Lord Athlone followed her.

CHAPTER VIII.

MISS GODFREY.

My sad heart is breaking
To think that from Edin
And thee I must part.
It may be for years,
It may be for ever.
Oh, why art thou silent,
Thou void of my heart?

EDWARD ATHLONE did not speak to Aileen once while they retraced their way through the corridor, nor, indeed, until they were in the hall again, then, as they stood before the fire, he said to her:

"Aileen, you have saved my life; in return you have met with a deadly insult from my brother, but as it has turned out let me entreat you to lock this shameful secret in your own breast, not to proclaim the villany of Lord Athlone to the public, for—for my sake, who am your friend, and who desire to serve you."

"I promise, Mr. Athlone," Aileen answered, "but it must be a terrible thing to have a brother like him," and she shuddered.

Edward Athlone smiled a stern smile.

"It is not necessary," he said, "that I should discuss my brother's character. I can say nothing good; I will be silent."

And he looked gloomily into the fire. While he was reading the story which the glowing coals told him—looking at the faces and crowds and cities and fairy palaces which his imaginative soul saw in the glowing embers—Aileen was watching his face; its perfect Greek line of profile; its dark colouring; the expressive eyes which saw her not. Instinct told her this, and

that she had no part whatever in the young man's thoughts.

"And why does that give me such a pain here at my heart?" the girl asked herself, and she answered the question to herself thus, "Only because I am an idiot," she said, bitterly, to her proud, sensitive, shrinking soul. "An idiot—yes, for what good can come of the friendship of a gentleman like Mr. Edward Athlone for a poor girl like me? He is thinking his own thoughts—thinking of the fair lady whom—he loves. I wish I knew her name," and then she spoke to herself again petulantly. "Arrah! and what good would that do me. I am very much of an idiot, I'm thinking."

Edward Athlone looked round suddenly at the girl by his side, recalled by some link in the daydream to a recollection of Aileen.

"Tell me," he said, "how much money do your friends really want to pay up this horrible rent?"

"It's two hundred pounds, sir, and the stock on the farm is not worth seventy."

Edward Athlone frowned darkly, and he cursed his past extravagance and present poverty, earl's son though he was, for he had squandered much money in odd, wild, fantastical fashion; he had been reckless, though never dissipated, and now he was sorry, for he would willingly have paid up the rent of the Darrells had he possessed the money.

As it was, however, he had exceeded his allowance, and was in debt on his own account, and earl's son though he was he could no more have given the Darrells two hundred pounds than he could have pacified the discontented people of Ireland, and restored harmony and goodwill between landlords and tenants throughout the realm.

"And I have nothing to give you," he said to himself, sadly, but anon he bethought him that there was a gift he might bestow upon this pretty peasant who had saved his life.

He pulled from his finger a ring and held it towards Aileen. It was of fine gold, and an emerald of the first water was set in it very exquisitely.

"That ring cost fifty pounds, Aileen, and ought to sell for thirty. Take it as a gift from me, not as a keepsake, for to one in your position it would only be a useless trifle. Besides, it is a few miles too large for those taper fingers, so sell it, Aileen, and convert the money to whatever use seems best to you, and if you like buy some very simple and cheap ornament, and take it as a keepsake. A silver locket, something of that sort, if, indeed, you care to be reminded of me. But why should you?" he added, with a quick sigh and a short laugh. "And now, Aileen, you must put on your cloak and follow me to the back, where there is a carriage waiting to take you back to Kilkist. Heaven grant you may reach it safely."

"I'd be safer walking," said Aileen.

"You shan't walk. I am going to send my mother's maid with you; her name is Godfrey; she is an excellent creature whom I remember ever since I was a child. She will put on the cloak I wore, so that if the carriage is stopped they will only see two women in country dress. Come along."

Aileen wrapped herself in her cloak, and then she took that of Mrs. Darrell on her arm and followed Edward Athlone along the passages and corridors that led from the hall to one of the great side doors. This was now open, and Aileen saw that the storm was still raging. The snow was driving down in blinding sheets, and the wind was blowing a perfect hurricane. A close carriage stood at the door and a woman's voice said rather sharply, "Please to make haste."

In another moment Aileen was safe inside the carriage. Edward Athlone put his head in and held out his hands to Aileen. She gave him her right hand, and he clasped it warmly in both his own.

"Heaven bless you, child," he said.

Then he drew back and the carriage rolled on.

"Please let me have the cloak," said Miss Godfrey, Lady Clondell's maid.

Aileen handed it to her.

"Will I put it on for you, ma'am?" she asked, sweetly.

"Yes, you know how such things are worn, I suppose, better than I do?" responded Miss Godfrey, a little sharply.

Certainly Miss Godfrey was not disposed just then to make herself at all agreeable to Aileen. There was a lump in the carriage, and by its light Aileen took note of this tried and faithful servant of the Athlone family.

She was of middle age, with a pale, stern honest face that one could trust, if one could not love it. She wore a blue cloth jacket and black bonnet, and the latter she took off and enveloped herself in the cloak and hood which Aileen gave her. When this was accomplished she said:

"What brought you and Mr. Athlone into each other's company. He is a wild young man. Heaven bless him! I've nursed him when he was a child, for I am a good twenty years older than he is, but he is a wild young gentleman and not a fit companion for a girl in your position. Don't take offense, young woman," continued Miss Godfrey, for Aileen's eyes flashed fire. "I mean it all for your good."

"Yes, ma'am, no doubt," responded Aileen, "but I know quite well what is due to myself. I am no more to blame for finding myself in Mr. Athlone's company than I am for finding myself in yours."

"Then will you tell me how it happened?" asked Miss Godfrey. "Did you meet Mr. Edward by accident on the common?"

"No," replied truthful Aileen, "but I cannot exactly explain it."

She paused a moment in some perplexity.

"When there is a secret," said Miss Godfrey, "there is always something wrong to hide."

"And if there is," replied Aileen, quickly, "it is no wrong of my doing. You must know, ma'am, that the country is in a dreadful state of discontent, and my friends are among those who are oppressed by the cruel laws; so I refuse to bring in the names of others; I would sooner have my tongue cut out."

"I don't think you would like to have your tongue cut out, young woman," responded Miss Godfrey, "for you seem to me to have a ready one, and to know well how to use it. Well, I don't wish you to compromise your friends. Who are they?" she added, with a very sharp, inquiring look at Aileen. "Did I hear your name was Moore? And are you the child whom Mrs. Darrell adopted? Your mother was a beauty and her beauty proved her bane. She was Mary Moore, and her father had been gardener here at the castle in the old lord's time, but he was dead and so was her mother, and the girl was an orphan and was brought up at the late countess's school for orphans at the other end of the county, and when she was of the age of seventeen she came as maid-of-all-work at the Shamrock Inn in Clondell, and she used at times to serve at the bar. A young lord, son of an earl, from England, who was visiting at the castle, saw her one day at the door of the Shamrock and fell in love with her. She was an idiot and listened to him, and he was ordered abroad to join his regiment. He went to India and was killed in battle, and then you were born, and your mother died of grief in the workhouse, for there you were born, and then Mrs. Darrell, who had known and loved your mother's mother, came to the workhouse and took you away wrapped up in her shawl, and she has been a mother to you ever since. You see I was here with the family at the time it all happened," continued Miss Godfrey. "I was upper nurse to Lord Athlone and Mr. Edward, then they were boys of four and six, and I remember how Mrs. Darrell was praised for her goodness. Well, you've grown a pretty young woman, Aileen, but take warning by your poor dead mother and don't let Mr. Athlone turn your head as young Lord Evesham turned hers."

"Am I sure he turned it at all, at all?" cried Aileen, fiercely.

For when anybody spoke against her dead mother all the temper within her was roused.

"Am I sure at all, madame? He is dead, and she is dead, and there is no record left that I know of to prove that the earl's son married the maid of the inn; but I have heard that he died quite secretly in Dublin, but he had the certificate of the marriage hidden away, nobody knew where but himself, and if he hadn't been killed in battle my mother would have been Countess of Llandudno, and I would have been Lady Aileen Evesham!"

Miss Godfrey's shrill laugh awoke Aileen from her momentary dream of greatness. She went off, indeed, into a perfect paroxysm of merriment, rocking herself to and fro, and fairly screaming in the excess of her hilarity. Aileen was in the main too sensible to resent this after the first sting of mortification and annoyance was over, for certainly the idea of her being a Lady Aileen, the daughter of a great English earl, did seem quite too absurd when one remembered she had been born in a workhouse; that her childhood and youth had been passed on the clay floored kitchen of a very poor Irish farmhouse; that it was her business to feed the poultry and pigs, and to walk to market and back, carrying her baskets; that she wore a linsey skirt, a cloth jacket, a woollen shawl, a hood, and thick country shoes with nails in them; that she swept the floors, scrubbed the boards, lighted the fires, and boiled the potatoes and made the butter; that she was the merest peasant girl in fact, and that this Miss Godfrey knew what real ladies were, for she had lived in the service of such all her life.

Well, then, might she scream with merriment when she heard Aileen call herself Lady Aileen Evesham.

"I have amused you, madame," said Aileen, sadly, yet with a touch of pride still in her voice, "but I would have you to know that the reason I spoke so was not from a wish to exalt myself, for I know that no proof exists that Lord Evesham married Mary Moore, but I spoke so to try and clear away the dirt which you (perhaps, not meaning to hurt my feelings) were flinging on my dear mother's grave. Let her rest in peace. Her short life was full to the brim of sorrow. Do not rake up her faults, madame, or what you may be mistaken in calling her faults. Let her rest quietly in her grave."

Aileen did not give way to a tempest of sobs. Miss Godfrey saw two bright tears fall and the good woman's heart was touched.

"My dear," she said, "God forbid I should wound your feelings by casting reproach upon your poor dead mother, who was as beautiful a girl as ever lived, and as good a girl likewise, except in this one instance of being weak and silly through letting her heart govern her head. I only want to warn you that the Athlones are a wild family."

"Here we are at Kilkest village," said Aileen. "I see the lamp outside between the publichouse and the chapel. I'll get out here, ma'am, if you please. I could find my way in pitch darkness to my place now, and I don't want anybody to notice me. May I get out here, madame?"

"Certainly you may," Miss Godfrey replied.

Then she put her head out of the window and called to the driver to stop, and she opened the carriage door. Aileen descended upon the snowy road and waved an adieu to Miss Godfrey. She stood still and watched by the faint starlight (the snow had ceased again, but the moon was hidden by clouds). She watched the carriage retreating.

When it was lost to sight she turned her steps towards Kilallen, which was not more than a couple of hundred yards from the spot where she had descended; she hurried along past the outbuildings, and presently she stood in front of the dreary, bare-looking whitewashed house.

She saw still the red light gleaming through the small panes of the kitchen window, covered with its faded chints curtain. They were not gone to bed yet then, but the visitors had left, for she did not hear the sound of their voices.

"The back door is always on the latch," she said. "This one will be locked. I'll creep round and let myself in the best way I can."

Aileen crept round by the great barn, and so made her way to the back door close by the little patch of potatoes, cabbages, and two stunted apple trees, called by courtesy the "garden" at Kilallen. She tried the door, it was on the latch. Thus she crept upstairs noiselessly to her room, locked herself in, struck a match, and lighted the rushlight which stood on the shelf.

Then by its dull, sickly glare she undressed and lay down to rest on her poor hard bed—to rest but not to sleep. She lay tossing, the exciting events of the last seven hours passed and repassed before her excited mental vision like the sights of some eccentric panorama. Lord Athlone, blonde complexioned, languid, yet cruel and insolent; the gorgeous apartments at the magnificent castle, and the face, figure, and flowing garments of the beautiful countess mother. Besides all these there was the handsome, thoughtful face of Athlone. Alas! for poor Aileen, her thoughts reverted to that young gentleman more than was good for her peace, and she remembered with a chill of disappointment that Miss Godfrey had told her he was not to be trusted; that he was "a wild young man."

"Oh, and he seems so good and so noble," said Aileen, to herself.

Soon she heard all the others coming up to bed. She arose at the earliest streak of dawn, hurried on her clothes, and hastened down into the kitchen, where she swept the floor and the hearth, brought in wood and turf and lighted the fire. Then she felt a certain weariness creep over her.

She sank into one of the wooden chairs, covered her face with her hands, and began to weep some idle tears. All at once she was sensible of another presence in the room. Looking up she saw Dermot, pale, haggard, his hair hanging about his face, his clothes disordered. Something in his manner filled her with a strange, weird, unutterable horror.

The grey, wintry daylight looked in at the window and threw up into strong relief the ghastliness, the pallor, the deep tragic pathos of Dermot's face.

"Aileen," said the young man, "Aileen, acushla machree, your indifference has driven me mad. Aileen—"

At that moment something came between Aileen and the daylight. She looked up at the window from which she had withdrawn the curtain, and a low cry of despair broke from her lips.

(To be Continued.)

OUT FOR A RAMBLE.

YOUNG Jenny stood at the cottage door
With an anxious look on her face,
For the night was dark and growing late

And no sign of him could she trace
As she linger'd, wishing the silvery moon

Would lighten the road she gazed up soon.

No voice reecho'd her anxious call
As she stood on that murky night,
With the darkness shrouding like a pall

The road to the left and right,
"I must give him up," she with anguish cried.

"How provoking to tease me thus;
To think that old cat should go and hide—

Oh, won't missis be making a fuss."

O. P.

It has been hinted that there will be a series of costume balls given next season by the Princess of Wales.

HEREDITARY DANGERS.

THERE isn't such a vast amount of pith to the story, nor would it be of interest were it not for the fact that it reflects a philosophy of heredity that is as empty and nonsensical as it is idle and ridiculous. Do not imagine that we would, for one moment, make light of the law of true heredity. That is one of the most interesting and valuable branches of both physiological and psychological science, and may be studied by all; but we allude to that idea embraced by many, which had better be called fatality than heredity, and which would frighten a man from making an honest effort in a direction where the same effort had been aforetime attended with disastrous results; or, which would shut the man for ever out from good society, because his great-grandfather had been hanged.

The first time that we ever heard the story we laughed till the tears started—not so much at the story, but at the way in which that utterly indescribable Barber S—— told it.

"My good man," said an old deacon, addressing a young man who had but lately entered upon seafaring life—they were in the large room of the old Elm House—"where did your father die?"

"He was lost at sea, sir."

"And where did his father die?"

"He was cast away going round Cape Horn, sir."

"Yes, yes—and where did your great-grandfather die?"

"He was lost off the Cape of Good Hope, in a hurricane."

"I don't suppose you know anything about his father—your great-great-grandfather?"

"Only that he went down, with all hands, in the Indian Ocean, knocked under by a typhoon."

Whereupon the deacon folded his hands, and rolled up his eyes in holy horror, as he solemnly said:

"Young man, will you not profit by the warning? You will but tempt inevitable Providence by going to sea again. Death at sea is hereditary in your family!"

The young sailor pondered for a time, and then asked of the deacon:

"Look'ee, sir, where did your father die?"

"He fell asleep, my young friend, while lying quietly at home in his bed."

"And his father, where did he die?"

"He also closed his eyes on this sublunary scene while reposing in his bed."

"And do you know where your great-grandfather died, sir?"

"He also, I am happy to say, met the inevitable visitant in the peaceful rest of his bed."

"Well—p'raps you don't know where your great-great-grandfather died?"

"Yes, my son, the family record runs back for many generations, and I am happy in the knowledge that they all—every one, so far as we have account—died peacefully in their own beds."

The sailor gave the deacon a look of horror unutterable.

"Happy, are you, in that knowledge! Mercy! I should think the sight of a bed would frighten you out of your wits. Don't you, sir, never go to bed again! Aint it as plain as can be, 'at death in bed is red-heady in your family?"

MR. THEODORE MARTIN has completed another volume of his work, "Life of the Prince Consort," and has been to Windsor with the proof sheets for the inspection of the Queen. Every page of the work passes under her Majesty's eye before it is published, and the last volume, we believe, is particularly satisfactory to her Majesty as well as to the author.

MARK TWAIN is said to be about to lecture on the obelisk which is coming from Alexandria to the U. S. He says it was originally erected some 10,000 years ago with the object of being exported to America.



[REJECTED.]

LOST THROUGH GOLD;

OR,

A BEAUTIFUL SINNER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Frank Bertram's Wife," "Strong Temptation," &c., &c.

CHAPTER I.

HIS FIRST LOVE.

'Twas rank and fame that tempted her.

"AND is this your final decision, Sybil?"

The speaker was a tall, soldierly-looking man of some thirty years; the scene, a fragrant conservatory opening from a crowded ball-room. He stood quite alone with the person to whom he had appealed. His eyes bent down as he gazed into hers, as though he would read her very soul.

Sybil Vavasour did not hesitate. All of love she would ever know was given to George Arnold; he was a gentleman of long descent, and a favourite of society, but he was not rich. "I am very sorry, George, but it cannot be; it is impossible."

"Sybil, would you have me believe you the veriest coquette that ever breathed? All these weeks and months you have led me to think you liked me."

"I did more," answered the beauty of that season. "I loved you; I love you now, but I can never be your wife."

"Sybil, surely after such a confession I have at least the right to ask why?"

"I have no taste for poverty. Forgive me, George, but when I marry my husband must be rich. I am tired of struggles; I want ease; my whole soul craves for luxury."

"And for luxury you will sell yourself? Heaven help you, Sybil! You little reck the misery you are preparing for your future."

"I have no fears."

"You are doing a threefold wrong," cried Arnold, earnestly. "You are sacrificing yourself to your ambition, blighting my dearest hopes; and pray, if you love me, what have you to offer that other man who shall be able to give you the wealth you covet?"

"I shall grace his house by my presence," answered Sybil, with a proud consciousness of her beauty; "I will dispense his hospitality royally, and make his house the fashion. I am not fitted for limited means, George; they would kill me."

His dark eyes gleamed with scorn as he looked on her. George Arnold had loved Sybil very dearly. She had smiled on him and encouraged him; he had believed her true and loving; in an instant he was undeceived; his idol lay prone on the ground; his faith in woman was gone, he thought, for ever.

"We must return to the ball-room," said Miss Vavasour, as calmly as though their conversation had been on the weather or the latest fashions; "I shall be missed, and I am engaged to Lord Aston for the next dance."

As they re-entered the spacious room George felt dimly one chapter in his life's history was closed for ever. A gentleman approached to meet them, the Earl of Aston, a widower of sixty.

"I think this is our dance."

He bowed with courtly grace to Sybil and nodded carelessly to George, whom he knew well. Miss Vavasour put her dainty hand on the peer's shoulder. His arm encircled her waist. As George watched them in the mazes of the dance he fully recognised the splendid beauty of the woman who had refused him, and yet he could not help a thrill of pity for the man whose wealth should purchase Sybil's hand.

Captain Arnold and Miss Vavasour had been friends for years, ever since the tall, sunburnt

school-boy of fourteen had bowed before the wiles of the gipsy sprite of five; distantly related, all had favoured their intimacy. When George left England with his regiment, Sybil was a child in the schoolroom. He returned a year before that scene in the conservatory to find her newly presented; her beauty the theme of many tongues. The old boyish fancy ripened into something deeper, and he wooed his cousin with all the eagerness of a first love. There was no obstacle to their union, although Sybil had spoken slightly of his means.

Captain Arnold's income was from all sources quite eight hundred a year, and Miss Vavasour, the penniless orphan of a ruined father, had no right to look for more. All the prosperity which surrounded her belonged to her mother's second husband, who did not greatly affect Sybil.

Without being unkind to her, he would gladly have got rid of her by marriage, and considered Captain Arnold a very suitable parti for his portionless stepdaughter. In the black aftertime Arnold often thought of Sybil as she appeared that night in the zenith of her beauty, her stately figure robed in dusky lace; bright, flashing pomegranates at her bosom and amid the masses of her blue-black hair; soft white tulle shading her neck and arms, her eyes sparkling with excitement, and her voice low and musical.

"Miss Vavasour has mistaken her vocation," said an artist to Arnold, when they quitted Mrs. Ellerslie's mansion in company. "She should have been an actress."

"She may be yet," returned George, thinking that if she persevered in her resolve she might have to act a part her whole life through.

"Not she; a peeress, more likely. I don't particularly envy the man, for that girl has more of the demon than the angel in her."

"Your remarks upon my cousin are quite bewildering," answered the captain, devoutly wishing his friend would change the subject.

"I had quite forgotten the relationship."

Queer, is it lawful to marry one's cousin's god-father?"

"Quite, I believe. Why?"

"Oh, I only wanted to know if there was any impediment to Lord Aston's felicity. He seems quite determined to carry off your cousin to the land of cakes."

"It won't be Lord Aston," said Arnold, shortly. "He has heaps of children left behind in Scotland, and he must be sixty if he's a day."

"He has no son and heir, and only two daughters," persisted the artist, "and as to his age most women like to be an old man's darling."

Very soon after that summer's night Captain Arnold exchanged into a regiment ordered abroad, and he was at Malta when a packet reached him containing two dainty cards tied with white satin ribbon, on one the "Earl and Countess of Aston," on the other "Miss Vavasour." Then he knew that his talkative friend had been right.

The news gave George great pain. After the blow she had dealt him among the flowers Sybil had no power to wound his true heart again. He saw her then in her true colours, and great though his love had been for her, it perished. He could not care for a woman whose mind was so unworthy her face. He and Sybil were parted just as finally then by her own words as ever the elegant ceremony at St. George's, Hanover Square, could sever them. When George wrote to congratulate his godfather he had many a misgiving for the earl's happiness, but not the slightest envy for his lot.

CHAPTER II.

ALICE.

Constant sunshine how'er welcome,
Ne'er would ripen fruit or flour:
Giant oaks owe half their greatness
To the scathing tempest's power.
Thus a soul untouched by sorrow
Aims not at a higher state;
Joy seeks not a brighter morrow,
Only sad hearts learn to wait.

ASTON MANOR, the seat of the Duncan family, was situated in one of the fairest Scotland shires. The house itself was a spacious mansion approached by a leafy avenue of grand old trees, and looked over a beautifully wooded park. All wherever the eye rested belonged to the Earl of Aston, and besides the queen consortship of this fair estate he could offer to Sybil Vavasour the family diamonds and a jointure of ten thousand a year.

Sybil's wildest dreams seemed realised when, one bright, cold January day, wrapped in velvet and costly furs, she entered Aston Manor as its mistress. Leaning on her husband's arm, she passed through the long file of obsequious servants in the hall, gathered there to do her homage, up the wide oaken staircase into the drawing-room hung with watered silk. All spoke plainly of the wealth she had craved for. If she had sold herself it was at a royal sacrifice.

"Welcome home, Sybil. Welcome to Aston, my darling," said the earl, proudly, to his beautiful bride. "Does it seem a pleasant place to you?"

"It seems like a fairy tale," said Sybil, with pretty amazement. "Everything is lovely."

"Ah, but there is something you have not seen yet." He turned sharply to his house-keeper, who had just appeared to show her new mistress to her own rooms. "Where are the children? How is it they are not here to welcome the countess and myself?"

"Little Lady Gertrude is but poorly, my lord, and the nurse thought she might take cold if she came downstairs, and she was so disappointed that Miss Tracy and Lady Adela stayed with her."

"You all spoil Lady Gertrude," said the earl, with a smile. Then he turned to his wife. "Shall Mrs. Bond show you your rooms, Sybil?"

Perhaps her heart was touched by all he was

showing on her, for she answered gently, "No, Lord Aston, I would rather she showed me the way to the nursery. I want to see my children."

She said it very nicely—very pleasantly, but without a touch of tenderness or genuine feeling; in very truth, Sybil hated children. She had no love to give the little Ladies Duncan. The nursery was a bright, cheerful room; just then its legitimate head seemed absent, probably discussing the new mistress in the servants' hall. In a large armchair, drawn close to the fire, sat a girl but little younger in years than the countess, and in a different style to the full as beautiful.

With this difference, Sybil Vavasour had the loveliness of a woman of the world, Alice Tracy that of a shrinking, timid girl. She was slight and delicately made; her hair of soft silken brown, which the firelight turned to gold; her eyes dark lustrous blue; her innocent soul shining out of their clear orbs; a wistful smile on her lips, as though she had known much sorrow, and a wonderful tenderness of expression which explained the love with which the children clung to her.

They were girls of ten and eleven, almost as dark as their stepmother. Gertrude was on her lap, Lady Adela, the heiress presumptive of the Duncans, at her side; she was telling them some fairy tale and they listened with breathless attention.

"So Beauty married the Prince and lived happily ever afterwards," concluded Alice.

"Beauty must have been just like you, Alice," said the child on her lap, "only we don't want any prince to come and take you away, down, Adela?"

Adela said "no" simply but earnestly. The earl's eldest daughter was a child of few words but deep feeling. Presently Gertrude came back from fairyland to the interests of every-day life.

"Don't you think papa will soon be here, Alice?"

"He is here now, True," said Lord Aston, from behind them. Then both children rushed to him.

"This is your new mamma. Go and tell her you are very pleased to see her."

The children obeyed readily enough, and Sybil bestowed a cold kiss apiece on them and looked inquiringly at their companion, with whom the earl was shaking hands.

"This is Miss Tracy, Sybil. She is a distant cousin of mine, and this has always been her home."

Lady Aston bowed very slightly. She had no sympathy with portionless young ladies, probably from having only just escaped from their rank. Alice's blue eyes were bent on her almost entreatingly, but Sybil had no kind words to spare, and left the room with her husband.

"What a beautiful young lady," said little True, wonderingly. "I thought she would have had white hair like papa. Alice, do you like her?"

But Lady Adela spared Alice from answering this question.

"I don't a bit," exclaimed the child, emphatically. "She looks just like one of the big statues in the hall. I don't believe she loves us a scrap."

"Adela" came the gentle voice of Alice Tracy, "indeed you must not say such things."

"Well, it can't be helped now," said Lady Adela, with a comical shrug of her shoulders, learnt from her French master; "but I do wish papa had married you if he must have had another wife at all, and I'm sure it says in my bible a man ought only to have one."

The new reign began very smoothly at Aston Manor. To a careless observer, Sybil was the most dutiful and submissive of wives. The earl's wishes were consulted in everything, all orders emanated from him, and yet although the peer was profoundly unconscious of it, Sybil took her own way in everything without seeming to rule. She led her husband in chains of silk, so soft he never felt them, yet strong enough to work her will.

The first perceptible change was in the lot of Alice Tracy. Alice had been treated as a

daughter of the house. Servants had treated her with the same respect they would show years hence to Lady Adela. Soon she never appeared downstairs at all, excepting with the children; insensibly she was made to feel her place was the school-room, not the drawing-room.

"The children are so shy," their stepmother had remarked, benevolently to the earl. "They would be miserable with a regular governess. Alice can very well teach them for the present."

"My dear," said Lord Aston, mildly, "Alice Tracy is my own cousin. I don't want to make a dependent of her."

"But she would be so dull separated from the children."

"I thought, Sybil, she might have gone to London with us in the spring and see a little of the world. She is a Duncan by the mother's side, and I should like to see her well married."

"Well, she shall have her choice," decided the countess, benevolently.

And Lady Aston made the proposal herself to Miss Tracy, showing so plainly she would regard her company as a misfortune that Alice declined politely at once. Afterwards she thanked the earl with tears in her eyes, and declared she should be happiest with the children—another victory of my lady.

So Miss Tracy was left behind at the Manor with her two little cousins, while the earl and countess went southwards after Easter to enjoy the delights of the London season. Lady Aston was quite as beautiful as Miss Vavasour had been, and people were just as ready to tell her so. Yet, with it all there was a flaw in Sybil's felicity. Very few women have no heart at all, and whatever Sybil possessed was given to George Arnold. She, Lord Aston's wife, passionately loved the young captain.

She did not regret the step she had taken, but she missed George sorely. Last season he had been always at her side. Ah, why had not fate given him a title and princely income instead of Lord Aston. There were times when Sybil looked and hated the peer, simply because he was not another man.

There were others when she looked forward to a time when, a young and wealthy widow, she might listen to George's suit again and give him a different answer. Lord Aston was sixty turned, she twenty-one: what sympathy could there be between them?

Then came late in June a ball at the house of the chief of the Foreign Office, and among the guests were many officers who had served in George's late regiment. One of them who had been well known to Sybil came up and begged for the favour of a dance.

"Strange news about Arnold, is it not, Lady Aston?" he began, as they promenade after the dance was over. "You remember Arnold? I used to meet him at Mrs. Ellerslie's. A sort of cousin of yours, was he not?"

Lady Aston admitted the relationship.

"Do you mean his exchanging into another regiment, Colonel Vane? I knew that long ago."

"Ah, but he's not in any regiment at all now, Lady Aston, or won't be much longer, at least."

"Is he so ill as that?"

And though her voice was calm she felt as though her life hung on the colonel's answer.

"I'll not the least in the world; something stranger than that; surely you have heard it, Lady Aston?"

"No," with a faint smile; "you are speaking in riddles to me."

"Why, an old uncle of his who was a sort of family scapegrace, and who hadn't been heard of since he went to India thirty or forty years ago, has just died and left George his money bag."

"But was there anything in the money bags, Colonel Vane?"

"The title deeds of a charming estate in Blankshire which the old nabob had just purchased through his agents, and thirty thousand a year. Pretty substantial money bags, weren't they? And only one condition, that Arnold

should sell out and spend three months of every year in Scotland."

"He'll find it very dull in Blankshire," remarked Sybil, "if it at all resembles Downshire."

"Ah, Aston Manor is in Downshire. I had quite forgotten. Why, Lady Aston, your cousin will be almost a neighbour; Trent Park can't be more than thirty miles off."

"Trent Park?" she exclaimed, hastily. "Do you really mean that George Arnold owns Trent Park?"

"I do, indeed!"

"Then, Colonel Vane, your geography is slightly at fault. Trent Park cannot be three miles from the Manor; and it is the great lament of the neighbourhood that no one lives there."

"Ah, well, someone will live there soon, Lady Aston. Your ladyship must exert yourself to find Arnold a very charming wife. Trent Park is too rich a hermitage for a bachelor."

"I don't think so at all."

"I am sure Lord Aston would agree with me. He, at least," with a meaning smile, "should hold the most favourable opinion of matrimony. I never saw him looking better."

Which speech failed of its object, if that object was to please the countess. In her inmost soul she knew life held nothing more bitter for her than George Arnold's marriage, but she thought it an improbable event. He had loved her a year ago; he had gone abroad because she refused him; surely his love would last a year or two, and by then she might be free.

What a mockery of fate to shower riches on her lover too late for her to share them. Ah, well, men had waited long enough before now for women far less beautiful than herself. Sybil never gave a thought that in this case they would be waiting also for dead men's shoes.

CHAPTER III.

LADY ASTON'S DESIGN.

Full well experienced lovers know,
And chiefly those who blissful burn,
That kiss is hopeless we bestow
On charms that yield no kind return.

Time passed on. Lord and Lady Aston went back to their manor to find Trent Park still closed, and no rumour even of its master's arrival. Sybil heard Colonel Vane's story confirmed by many mouths before she left London. In every detail but one it was correct; the time by which his uncle's will George should spend at the Park was only one month out of every twelve.

The reason of this condition was very simple. The testator feared his heir might have the passion for wandering which was almost an inheritance in the family. His travels could not be very rash or continuous if each year he was compelled to return to the estate in Scotland, whose acquisition had been his uncle's pride, and a very just pride too. For its size few finer estates could be found than Trent Park, which lay one mile from the village of Aston, and about two from the beginning of Lord Aston's private grounds.

Autumn faded into winter. Amid the hosts of visitors to whom Sybil dispensed her husband's hospitality royally the countess found time to wonder that no news came of Arnold. He had written once in reply to Lord Aston's inquiries, and in alluding to his uncle's will he said its conditions would be strictly complied with. That was all. Mr. Arnold the elder had died in May. Christmas had come, but still his heir lingered abroad.

Aston Manor was, as Sybil had predicted, the "fashion." No one invited there stayed away. Time passed right merrily; people declared the countess to be a devoted wife and indulgent stepmother, but amid all the gaiety there was at least one sad heart in the old manor, and it belonged to Alice Tracy. How it came about she never guessed, but Lady Aston hated her. The gentle girl had done her no harm. Never once had she failed in respect to the mistress of

the manor, but Sybil hated her with the unreasoning anger of a jealous woman.

Alice was the idol of the children and the servants. A special protégée of Lord Aston, she seemed endowed with a peculiar faculty for winning love, yet for none of these things did Sybil hate her. It was the dislike of a nature purer than her own, and of a face to the full as beautiful.

She felt Alice Tracy knew for what she had married her husband; she had been lovely and portionless, and she had traded well with her sole capital, her face. To bring down Alice to her level was Lady Aston's design. To make her life at the manor one of such constant vexation and petty slights that she should be eager to escape from it at any cost, to marry her not "well," but recklessly, was Sybil's plan.

So the countess allowed Miss Tracy to mingle with her guests. She treated her outwardly with kindness, yet not a man there but knew Lady Aston would not count him her enemy for any breach of respect to Miss Tracy, not a woman but had been told privately of the troubles this flighty girl caused the fair young matron.

"She looks quiet enough," said Lady Carden, a good-tempered widow of forty, when it came to her turn to be taken into my lady's confidence.

"Quiet, but deceitful. Ah, dear Lady Carden, life cannot be perfection. Without Alice Tracy mine would be fair enough. Not that I wish her ill. I take as much interest in her neatly as in the dear children, but it is disheartening work."

It was strange that in a large assembly of average intellect no one perceived Lady Aston's true motive. The ladies one and all sided with her. Women are so apt to go against a defenceless girl whose best gift is her beauty. Yet among the guests there was one who had read the countess truly. Ralph Johnson was the son of a country gentleman, who in the decline of life had married his cook, of which alliance the said Ralph was the only issue.

At the time of this story the squire and the c-devant cook had both gone to their rest, and their son ruled in their stead. On the father's side of old descent, Mr. Johnson was generally received in the neighbourhood. Possessed himself of ample means, he had no need to marry money, but if he would preserve his footing in the county he must ally himself with birth.

He had led a wild enough life. People told strange stories of his younger days, but it was reported now that he had sown his wild oats—and a goodly crop there must have been—and was seeking a wife who should do the honours of his house better than his plebeian mother had ever done them for his father.

Ralph was thirty turned. Physically he was a fine-looking man, but bearing the brand of his origin. Although vehement and passionate, he was shrewd and clear-headed, but neither clever nor intellectual. He was a man of indomitable will and angry purpose.

His whole life long he had obtained whatever seemed necessary to his pleasure. He knew perfectly well that Lady Aston wished to rid the manor of her husband's cousin, and when he had seen Alice's fair patrician beauty he was very ready to help the countess in her design.

On New Year's Eve there was a grand gathering at the manor. Besides the guests staying in the house, many came from the neighbourhood to swell the throng. It was the first time Miss Tracy had ever appeared at so large an entertainment, and as she entered the ball-room there were some who thought her slight, graceful form, in its simple white robes, as attractive as the more majestic beauty of the Countess of Aston.

Ralph Johnson was Alice Tracy's shadow that night, for his mind was made up that she should be his own. To most present he made this clear. Many saw the orphan girl might, if she would, be mistress of Greatwood, but to Alice herself the idea never came.

"This is a great contrast to last year,"

observed Mr. Johnson, as he led his partner out through the glass doors on to the terrace to breathe the cool air, so refreshing after the crowded ball-room. "Last New Year's Eve the manor was shut up, and looked as dreary as Trent Park does now."

"Yes," said Alice, a little sadly, thinking of how happily that year had begun. She and the children had spent last winter at Hastings while the manor was being prepared for its mistress. "All is very different now."

"Lady Aston is a fine woman—could hold her own, I should say."

"She is very beautiful," replied Alice, shortly, disliking this criticism of her cousin's wife.

"Other people are quite as beautiful, to my taste," he said, meaningly. "Miss Tracy, why do you never wear jewels?"

Alice smiled outright at the question.

"I like flowers best," Mr. Johnson. Besides, frankly, I have no jewels. It is not everyone you know who is born to diamonds like Lady Aston."

"Lady Aston was not born to them."

"She wears them as if she were. Mr. Johnson, won't you go back to the ball-room?"

They were still on the terrace, having been walking up and down during the preceding conversation.

"Let me find you another partner. We are short of gentlemen to-night and I ought not to engross one of the best dancers any longer."

She was longing to get away from him but did not know how to manage it.

"Thank you. I'd rather stay here. What a beautiful night it is, Miss Tracy!"

"Very. The stars are so bright."

"I should have a splendid drive if I were going home to-night. Do you know Greatwood, Miss Tracy?"

"I have passed the gates. I admire your fine old trees very much. I suppose the house owes its name to them?"

"Yes. You would like my gardens. I hope to show them to you some day, and the house, too."

Now, when a bachelor expresses a wish to show a young lady his house does it not mean he hopes one day she will take up her abode there? Innocent as Alice was in the ways of love-making, a glimmer of Mr. Johnson's intentions dawned on her.

"I really must go back now," she interposed, quickly. "They are beginning the last quadrille, and I am engaged for it."

The moon shone full on her lovely face, and on her bright hair. Ralph Johnson thought her the loveliest creature he had ever seen, and in his heart he swore a great oath that she should be his wife. Then forgetting all generosity, all respect, remembering only that they two stood alone, and she was fair to see, he caught her suddenly in his arms, and pressed burning, passionate kisses on her full red lips.

It was the work of an instant. In another she had broken away from him and rushed through the glass doors back into the house like a frightened deer.

"Little vixen," muttered Mr. Johnson; "but I rather like a dash of opposition in a woman. One doesn't get tired of her quite so soon. She'll get used to my kisses fast enough. Lady Aston will be on my side. I warrant before this year is very old, Miss Alice, you'll be Mrs. Johnson."

CHAPTER IV.

WOMAN AGAINST GIRL.

"Come, madame, come, I in all haste was sent."

"And I in all unwillingness will go."

SHAKESPEARE.

"Mr lady wishes to see you at once in her boudoir, Miss Tracy."

It was two or three days after the ball. Alice had kept herself upstairs, isolated from all the gay throng below. The girl's pride was outraged, and her one desire was to escape from Ralph Johnson. Not to a living creature had

she related that scene on the terrace. She blushed at its very recollection, but instinct told her it would be worse than useless to appeal to the countess for protection.

She rose wearily enough from a low chair by the schoolroom fire, and started unwillingly to obey my lady's summons. Why could not Lady Aston leave her in peace when all she asked was to be let alone?

The countess received Alice graciously, almost affectionately. She made her sit down on a couch near herself, and began to comment upon her pale cheeks and heavy eyes.

"What have you been doing with yourself, Alice? I have hardly seen you since the ball."

Alice murmured something, what she could hardly have told. She feared Lady Aston's politeness almost more than her anger. One at least was genuine but the other—

"Foolish child," said my lady, smiling. "I know all about it. Mr. Johnson has only just left me."

"Mr. Johnson!" gasped Alice.

"The children will miss you dreadfully, and I am sure we shall all be sorry to lose you; but we must try to rejoice at what is for your good," said the countess, piously, looking as though to rejoice in this instance cost her very little effort.

"I don't understand," rejoined Alice, timidly. "Please, Lady Aston, won't you tell me what you mean?"

"Only this, my dear Alice. That Mr. Johnson wishes to make you his wife and the mistress of Greatwood, and all your friends must be very glad of your good fortune."

"But I don't want to marry Mr. Johnson," answered Alice, very resolutely. "I hardly know him at all, and I do not like him much. Besides he never said anything to me of this."

"He will speak to you himself this afternoon," returned my lady, calmly. "Mr. Johnson knows enough of good society to obtain the consent of your guardians first. He is a very worthy man, and I think you will be most happy."

"I shall never marry him, Lady Aston."

"Why not?" sharply.

"Because I do not care for him, and I do not choose to be any man's wife just because he happens to be rich."

My lady's colour rose at this innocent home-thrust. If ever her resolution could have faltered this unlucky speech confirmed it.

"Then," said the countess, fixing her dark eyes on the girl's face, "I think your conduct simply disgraceful."

"My conduct! But Lady Aston, what have I done?"

"Done! Played the part of a shameless flirt. Ever since Mr. Johnson has been here you have been inseparable. You have skated together, walked together, ridden together, the other night you hardly danced with anyone else, and you were away from the ballroom quite an hour to enjoy Mr. Johnson's society in private. It was the talk of the house. I knew Mr. Johnson for a strictly honourable man (a knowledge few possessed), and I pitied your youth, or I should have shown you before how displeased were my feelings of propriety. I have seen the world, and I say that if ever girl encouraged man you have encouraged Ralph Johnson."

And Lady Aston had so planned matters that to the outside world this accusation would seem just; by her own act and deed her young cousin had been thrown perpetually with Mr. Johnson during the last fortnight; in all the festivities at the manor he had been poor Alice's sworn cavalier. What could she answer?

"Indeed, Lady Aston, I could not help it; I never sought Mr. Johnson."

"You drew him on to seek you, at any rate. Pray, Miss Tracy, what do you expect in a husband? Mr. Johnson is one of the best partis in this county. He loves you honourably, and though you are penniless, is eager to make you his wife. Pray what do you want more?"

"Nothing, but a deal less."

"My husband has given you a happy home

and an education worthy of his own children. His great wish is for you to marry well; and a nice return you are making for his generosity."

"Does Cousin Frank really want to get rid of me?"

The words were broken by sobs.

"He is not half so eager to let you go as Mr. Johnson is to take you, but still the earl is really anxious for you to be married and your future secured."

"I would rather work for my own living."

"You can never do that," said Lady Aston, decidedly. "There are but two callings open to women of gentle birth—teaching and companionship."

"Well, I would rather far be a governess than Ralph Johnson's wife."

"If you really think so I wonder you allow him the privileges of an accepted lover."

A vivid crimson coloured Alice Tracy's fair skin. How had Lady Aston heard of that episode on the terrace?

"If you imagine," went on the countess, "that any mother would entrust her children to one who was in the habit of receiving such attentions from a man she did not intend to marry, you are very much deceived. I assure you that if you persist in your behaviour, I cannot allow Gertrude and Adela to remain in your companionship. You would be no fit associate for them."

It was the last drop in Alice's cup. She bowed her head and burst into an uncontrollable fit of weeping. Lady Aston saw her advantage.

"I cannot think what your objection is to Mr. Johnson. He is a very generous man; I am sure he would make an excellent husband. Then Greatwood is so near us; you would be able to see a great deal of the children."

"But I thought," said Alice, in a bewildered tone, "that when people married they generally loved each other."

"I am very certain Mr. Johnson loves you, and on your side affection would be sure to come."

"I never thought he cared for me like that. Oh, dear, I wish he hadn't!"

The countess almost smiled at the girl's simplicity.

"Is there anyone else, Alice?"

"Lady Aston?"

"My dear, do you like anyone else better than Mr. Johnson?"

"Oh, yes, lots!" said Miss Tracy, eagerly. "I like the old vicar and even his wife a great deal better."

"Ah, but do you refuse to marry Mr. Johnson because you would rather marry some one else?"

"No," said Miss Tracy, simply. "I don't want to marry anyone else."

"Then you will be reasonable and accept Mr. Johnson."

"But—"

"No buts," said my lady, authoritatively. "He adores you and you do not care for anyone else. You will make a charming mistress of Greatwood, Alice, and it will be delightful."

(To be Continued.)

SMALL VEXATIONS.

MANY young housekeepers find it exceedingly difficult to vary their bill of fare in a satisfactory manner. Perhaps they have not a large variety to select from; wanting this, they naturally sink into a monotonous routine of dishes. To make the most of one's resources in the culinary line an inventory must first be taken of them. Then the number of permutations and combinations they can be made to undergo is next in order. If the housekeeper will take almost any cook-book and check off in it the various dishes she can make out of what she has at command, she will find they will count up very rapidly. From these she can make bill of fares for herself for every day in the week, for every month in the year.

There are a great many ways of cooking potatoes, of cooking cabbage, of preparing apples. The varieties of bread and batter cakes are almost infinite. Puddings, pies, cakes are in endless variety. The chief difficulty she will have to contend with is with her own tendency to keep making the dishes she knows how to make, because it is troublesome to make those that are new or comparatively unfamiliar. If she can conquer this tendency the rest is easy enough. Any housekeeper who follows this plan will soon find her perplexities at an end.

A USEFUL LESSON.

TEACH your boy to save a part of his earnings, if it be ever so small a sum. If he can lay by only sixpence a week, let him save that. It doesn't amount to much, it is true, but it is worth saving; it is better saved than wasted—better saved than thrown away for tobacco, or beer, or any other worthless article or object. But the best thing about it is that the boy who saves two pounds ten shillings a year on a very meagre salary acquires a habit of taking care of his money which will be of the utmost value to him. The reason why working-men, as a class, do not get ahead faster, are not more independent, is that they have never learned to save their earnings.

Young people who desire to retain their own independence under all circumstances must learn to save. So surely as they do this, so surely will they be in a situation to ask no special favours. Every man needs to feel that he is the peer of other men; and he cannot do it if he is penniless. Money is power; and those who have it exert a wider influence than the destitute. Hence, it should be the ambition of all to acquire it—honestly, of course. This is a lesson in life which should be early learned.

SCIENCE.

A SINGULAR HABIT OF THE WOODCOCK.

AMONG several curious habits of the woodcock, its practice of carrying its young is perhaps the most interesting. The testimony of many competent witnesses is cited to corroborate the statement. The late L. Lloyd, in his "Scandinavian Adventures," wrote: "If, in shooting, you meet with a brood of woodcocks, and the young ones cannot fly, the old bird takes them separately between her feet, and flies from the dogs with a moaning cry."

The same author makes a similar statement in another work, this habit of the woodcock having been observed by a friend. One of the brothers Stuart gives, in "Lays of the Deer Forest," a graphic account of the performance. He says:

"As the nests are laid on dry ground, and often at a distance from moisture, in the latter case, as soon as the young are hatched, the old bird will sometimes carry them in her claws to the nearest spring or green stripe. In the same manner, when in danger, she will rescue those which she can lift; of this we have frequent opportunities for observation in Tarnaway. Various times when the hounds, in beating the ground, have come upon a brood, we have seen the old bird rise with the young one in her claws and carry it fifty or a hundred yards away; and if followed to the place where she pitched, she has repeated the transportation until too much harassed. In any sudden alarm she will act in the same way."

Another method of transportation has been observed by Mr. Charles St. John, and described in his "Natural History and Sport in Moray." He says: "I found out that the old woodcock carries her young even when larger than a snipe, not in her claws, which seem quite incapable of holding up any weight, but by clasping the little bird tightly between her thighs, and so holding it tightly against his own body."

This narrator doubts the feasibility of any other mode of transport, and notwithstanding the confirmation of his report by other observers, it is probable that the method stated by Mr. L. Lloyd is the one most commonly employed.

SPONGE GATHERING AROUND KEY WEST.

A CORRESPONDENT tells how sponges are gathered off Key West, in which waters, and along the Gulf coast of Florida, are the principal sponging grounds of the United States. The sponge schooners have two places for cleaning sponges, namely, Anclote Keys and Rock Island. The several varieties of sponges are classed according to their marketable value as "sheep wool," "yellow," "fox glove," "grass," etc., besides one class, the "loggerhead," which has no value, and is not thought worth picking up. The first named is the variety most sought, as it bears the best price. The most of the vessels engaged in the sponge trade are owned and fitted out at Key West. The outfit of a sponge schooner consists of a number of long poles with hooks fastened on the end for gathering; from three to seven small boats called "dingies;" from seven to fifteen men—according to the number of boats—with provisions for from eight to twelve weeks; water-glasses, etc.

In sponging each dinky carries two men, with water-glasses, sponge hooks, and other necessities. While one man sculls the boat about, the other, lying across the boat's thwart with his head in the water-glass, scans the bottom for sponges. The water-glass is nothing but a common deep wooden pail, with a circular pane of glass for a bottom. Placing this upright in the water, and putting the head in far enough to exclude most of the light, one can easily see an object on the bottom in six or seven fathoms of water. The sponger directs the sculler how to go by waving his hand, and when in a desirable position he thrusts his long pole down and hooks his sponge.

The vessels usually remain out upon the bars from Monday until Friday evening of each week, coming into the Keys Friday night in order to clean the sponges gathered the week previous, put those gathered the current week into the crawls, put their wood and water on board, and prepare for the next week. The freshly gathered sponges are put into crawls or pens, made by driving posts in the sand, where, at low water, they will be quite or almost dry. Here they are left until the next Saturday, to be washed by the tides. On the following Saturday they are cleaned by striking them one or two light blows with a paddle.

WHAT TO DO.

WHEN a legal gentleman rises in court to cross-examine a witness he is generally a rather aggravating being. The witness, confused and confounded, proved a liar while he is trying to tell the truth, accused of deceit when he finds it impossible to remember whether he drank two cups of coffee or three at the same meal partaken of five years before, gradually comes to hate that lawyer with a hate passing words, and sometimes gives him a piece of his mind, in spite of judge, jury, clerk, and crier, before he leaves the witness-box.

But all this cross-questioning is in the way of duty. People who are witnesses are prepared for it. The social cross-examination is another thing, and we have often heard the question asked: "What ought I to do? Is it wrong to tell white lies? Silence implies some reason for desiring to conceal one's affairs. What am I to do when an acquaintance asks me about things I would rather keep to myself? What can I say that is right and polite also?"

Ah, that cross-examiner! Who does not know her, with her what, and why, and where, and when? You are required to turn your heart

inside out before her. Not that she loves you so well that your affairs are important to her, but simply to gratify her impertinent curiosity? Were one sufficiently strong-minded he would have no concealment unless he was absolutely in the habit of breaking the laws. But, as it is, what matron likes to tell all her thrifty tricks for making home and wardrobe comfortable? What elderly maiden delights in telling her age? What young one, in confessing the name of the man she loves?

Every life has its privacies, into which no stranger is welcome to enter. Our woes and our romances, our deepest joys and our most humbling experiences—these are our own. There is nothing that cannot be drawn from anyone by questioning, if the answer is simply a truthful yes or no. Therefore are those people who cross-question one simply unbearable, and the problem as to what to do with them is yet unsolved.

However, one plan answers famously. Turn upon them with their own weapons. When they ask your age instantly ask theirs. When they inquire into your income become anxious concerning theirs. Question as persistently as they do, and the conversation will be turned at once to something more suitable for social conversation than one's private affairs. Try the plan; it will succeed with some of your tormentors, we have no doubt.—Ed.]

A LITTLE BIRD.

It was not in the blooming May,
It was not in the dimly spring.
But deep in the leaden grey
Of the new year's bitterest day,
That a sweet little bird had lost her way,
A tiny, feathery thing.
Lightly perched on my heart's best spray,
(Poor little bird! she had lost her way),
And folded her downy wing,
And chirruped and sung on my heart's best spray,
Folding her wee soft wing.
Sitting alone and apart,
Her notes ran clear and keen,
And lo! with a strange, sweet start,
An exquisite, shuddering smart,
Each unborn bud in my frozen heart,
Pent in its deeps unseen,
Flashed to the light, a quivering dart,
(Each yearning bud in my frozen heart),
And thrilled into poignant green!
And now she rests in my leafy heart,
Embowered in the shady green.

T. W.

TWICE REJECTED;

OR,

THE NAMELESS ONE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Baronet's Son," "Who Did It?" &c., &c.

CHAPTER XVIII.

How happy is he born and taught
That severeth not another's will,
Whose axiom is his honest thought,
And simple truth his utmost skill.

"MR. LORRAINE must go abroad. There is no other hope for his recovery."

Such was the verdict of the physicians, given after a long consultation, when the cripple had in a great measure rallied from the weakening effects of his wound, and Mrs. Vere and Clara, or to speak more correctly, Clara and the mother whom she completely governed, were fain to comply with the recommendation.

"My dear Clara, the fact is he ought to marry you at once. It is so very inconvenient for me to have to go with you, and of course you cannot

go without me unless you were his wife. It is scarcely safe for him to go alone," observed Mrs. Vere, fretfully.

"My dear mother, why do you blame me? As if I could propose to Hugh!" replied Clara, with a forced laugh. "It is very odd that he does not ask me, but as yet he has said nothing about it, and, as you say, it is impossible for him to go alone."

"I can't think what you want to marry him for," was the next lament of the old lady.

"Why do other girls want to marry, and especially on the eve of twenty-five?" laughed Clara, rather hoarsely. "Mamma, it is all very well for you to make difficulties and complaints, but I would like to know what you would do if I did not go off at all, and you left me a hopeless old maid instead of a countess?"

"Hugh is not an earl. He never may be one," said Mrs. Vere, sententially.

"It is most unlikely that he should not be. Lord Deloraine will scarcely marry again after his past experience," replied Clara.

"And you think you can get rid of him while you are still a young widow, eh, Clara?" was her mother's half sarcastic, half serious reply. "Well, you are my only child, and I suppose it must be so; but when once that is done I will end my days in peace without any more worry, whatever you may urge. Now I will go and talk to Hugh myself."

Mrs. Vere had a lurking idea that she might accomplish her pet scheme and free herself from all responsibility if she could but bring about the coveted marriage between Clara and the heir of the Lorraines, and her first words to the invalid had a bearing on that idea.

"My dear Hugh, I am so glad you are convalescent," she said, graciously, as she sat down by his couch. "It is most gratifying that poor Clara's cares and anxieties should be thus rewarded."

Hugh gave a rather impatient sigh.

"Thank you, aunt," he replied. "It is but a partial recovery, I am afraid," he said. "The doctors are positive as to the necessity of a warmer climate for me, and that does not look like recovery in my idea."

"Oh, nonsense! That is what the doctors always say," returned Mrs. Vere; "it is their natural talk; but what I was going to say is that it is rather awkward about Clara. You see, the dear girl would be wretched not to go with you, and yet it makes it necessary for me to undertake the journey; and after all, people are so censorious. They will say Clara is running after you," she went on, gravely.

Hugh gave an impatient gesture.

"Running after a poor cripple like me is not very likely," he returned. "If Clara or you are afraid of remarks then I should be the last person to wish you to go. It would be a selfishness I could never be guilty of."

"Oh, no! For heaven's sake do not talk so," returned Mrs. Vere, breathlessly. "I am sure Clara would never forgive me—never—to have such a thing even named. She considers herself so completely as your promised wife that if she stood with you at the altar it would make no difference. Still, if she were so in reality it would of course make it all correct and proper for her to go with you," added the lady, beseechingly, as if half afraid, half anxious, that her words should be misunderstood.

Hugh Lorraine looked firmly and unflinchingly at her.

"Aunt Vere," he said, "listen to me. I have been encouraged by Clara to believe that she can be happy as my wife, but I never will ask or allow her to marry me in my present state just to be a nurse to a possibly dying man. No, when this immediate danger is over, and I am once more in my ordinary health, it will be different. There will be a reasonable chance that I may live some years yet, and that Clara will be rewarded for her disinterested affection. But now, as I am, it is impossible. I cannot ever desire it," and Mrs. Vere was silenced if not convinced, hastily beginning to talk about the necessary plans for the future.

Italy was the prescribed region, and it was the idea of the invalid that he could change his

sojourn from the north to the south of the sunny land as the weather and his own feelings might alter. There were rooms engaged for them at Nice in the first instance, and from thence Hugh planned to go to Florence and Rome and Naples during the next few months.

Would Clara return a bride? That was the first idea in Mrs. Vere's mind as she listened to the programme. And had Clara's thoughts been read it is probable that she would have asked of Fate—would she return a countess?

Lord Deloraine had been heard of some short time since, and he was reported to be in delicate health and depressed spirits. It was all but an heir apparent she was marrying, and the only difficulty consisted in bringing about the marriage, a difficulty easy, as she believed, to be removed as time went on; and with that hope she and her mother began the slow and anxious journey.

"Well, Hugh, dearest, at last we are safe, or, rather, you are safe," said Miss Vere, tenderly, as they arrived at last at the hotel where they were to take up a lengthened sojourn, "and I do not think you are any the worse for the long journey, after all."

The cripple shook his head sadly.

"I think differently. I believe I am very weak, Clara. I feel as if my doom was sealed now. You are very good, very good, dear cousin, but you will, I fear, never be bound by duty to attend to me. You would be mad, and I should be mad to imagine such a thing."

It was an unpleasant idea to Miss Vere, and what was yet more disagreeable to her, she began to trace back these fancies to the time when Leila had appeared on the scene. True, it had also been at that time Hugh's accident had so shattered his health, but still, with an instinctive jealousy of that young and lovely rival, she tried to satisfy her restless doubts on that head.

"I wonder where that unlucky girl is who stole the jewels," she said, as if to change an embarrassing subject.

"Who was accused of stealing, you ought to say," returned the cripple, calmly. "I believe in her innocence as I do in my own."

"What Quixotic enthusiasm, dear Hugh."

"What simple justice, Clara. Could anyone see and know that poor girl and doubt for a moment that she was most cruelly maligned?" he replied, warmly.

"I only hope we may never come in contact with her again," exclaimed Clara, fretfully; "it is extremely disagreeable. One does not know what to do with persons so much below one and so doubtful in character. They are not exactly servants, and yet, of course, not ladies, and generally very pretentious in their ideas, especially if they fancy they have distinguished themselves," she went on, with a sneer. "But I will leave you now to rest yourself, and go and inspect the visitors' book. Somebody may be here that you know, and make it a little more cheerful for you, Hugh," and with a light kiss she left her invalid cousin to rest in peace.

But he did not sleep. Clara's words had conjured up thoughts and images that effectually banished what would have been a solace to him in his wearied state. He thought of Leila—the lovely one, the twice saviour of his life, the gentle, womanly, and deserted one, who was at that early age the very sport of misfortune and cruelty.

What bliss to be near her, to hear her sweet soothing voice, to see her lovely face bending over him; to feel the touch of her light fingers, that brought a thrill to his frame, even in the midst of his suffering. Ah! for Hugh! Leila had pierced him to the heart, albeit she had saved his life; she had taught him what it was to love, and what was more, she had taught him that his heart was not his betrothed bride's. Ah! ah!

He was bound to Clara, as it seemed, by all the ties of kindness and gratitude, and fitness of position. But the one great thing was yet

wanting. He did not love, and what was more, he felt he could never love Clara Vere. And yet he was bound to fulfil his pledge when such was possible.

He could almost welcome the suffering that made it a duty to delay, and he sank to sleep at last with the half-consoling despair that he should never be able to wed living woman, whether loved or unloved, high born or humble, ere sinking to the grave. Clara Vere had an object in inspecting the said visitors' book.

She had seen with her quick sharpness of perception the name of the Earl of Deloraine in more than one of the entries of visitors during the last day or two when they stopped at hotels en route, and it occurred to her busy brain that it was possible he might have followed them to the goal where so many English people land as a permanent residence, and her eager eyes glanced over the recent pages to find the familiar name.

It was not there, however, and she was about to give up the hope that she would have an opportunity of judging for herself as to the state and condition of the man on whom her future position depended, when a tall, spare figure, with features sharpened, and hair streaked with grey, more by care or illness than time, came up to the book, and seizing the pen which Clara had laid down, hastily dashed off a few words, which Clara could easily read, even where she stood, as the name she desired to see.

The Earl of Deloraine, for it was he who thus inscribed his name in the large volume, glanced idly at those immediately above it, and then with a natural impulse turned to examine the lady in whose elegant handwriting a name so familiar was entered. A mutual glance of recognition passed between them.

Lord Deloraine felt that he could scarcely ignore the presence of so near a relative, if it was, indeed, his crippled heir who was thus strangely brought in contact with him, and he addressed Miss Vere with the courteous deference that deprives any unusual breach of etiquette of any presumption.

"May I ask if the Mr. Lorraine, who is, I see a recent arrival, is of the family of Castle Deloraine," he asked, politely ignoring the possibility that Clara had decyphered his own autograph.

"Certainly," she said. "He is a great invalid, and my mother and I, his aunt and cousin, have come with him in hope of benefiting his health after a severe accident. We are but just arrived here."

"I must introduce myself, then, as his relative, Lord Deloraine," said the earl. "And there is some similarity between us that I am a wanderer also in search of 'benefit,'" he went on, bitterly. "I shall have the pleasure of seeing him, of course, though my stay here is uncertain."

"Oh, yes, it will do him good; it will rouse him," she said; "it is the best remedy for mental or bodily ills to meet with relatives and friends."

"Yes, when relatives are friends," observed the earl, cynically. "I have very slight acquaintance with Mr. Lorraine."

"He is ill and suffering, that is a passport to intimacy," said Clara, in the soft tones she could assume at pleasure.

"You think so. That is not a general idea. It rather repels than attracts friends, it is generally supposed."

"I do not think so. It gives more interest in a stranger than rude health and happiness," she said, in the same gentle accents. "But I will tell Mr. Lorraine you kindly mean to visit him, and then you can judge for yourself."

And with a bow that had a sort of "an revoir" significance, she left the room where the scene had taken place. Was she satisfied with the appearance of the man she had so longed to see. Did it increase or diminish her hopes of wearing the coronet of Deloraine? She sat down to consider the chances as she sought her mother's apartment to announce her discovery.

"He is not ill," she thought; "at least, not in body. There is no trace of disease about

him—none; at least, not what would shorten his life; but there is the sign of a deep and proud angry sorrow in his worn features. He is haughty and injured and alone. He has exiled himself from his country and friends; he thinks suffering repels. It will be a triumph to convince him he is wrong, and to obtain the confidence of such a deep nature. And who knows—who knows what may happen if that is accomplished? I may be at the castle sooner than I expect. Whatever is the result, it is my surest game. Yes, I see it all now. What is before me? It is worth an effort, though it may ruin all. But with watchful vigilance it may succeed, and if it fails, why there is always the cripple to fall back on; my charming betrothed; he at least is bound to me for life."

CHAPTER XIX.

Alas, our young affections run to waste
On water but the fœt, whence arise;
But we who dare luxuriate haste
Back to the one, as tempting to the eyes.

"LADY TEMPLE, this is the young person I spoke of whom I wished to recommend for your situation," was Madame di Ballard's introduction to Leila's new mistress a day or two after the girl's arrival at Nice.

It had been barely sufficient to recover the fatigues of her journey, but still youth and a determined will does much to assist Nature, and when the "Rejected One" entered the sitting-room of the Italian lady, she bore little trace of the mental and bodily suffering she had gone through save in a delicacy and pensiveness of tint and expression that rather added to than diminished her charms.

Lady Temple was scarcely less attractive in Leila's eyes, albeit in a very different way. She was of course a middle-aged woman; and had all the fleshy softness and languor of Italians at that time of life, but then in compensation she retained the splendid eyes, the rich black hair, and clear skin which gave a certain attraction to her even then when youth was past, and her young daughter was already beginning to aspire to the early maturity of her mother, and looked at least two years older than English girls would have done at the same age. But what was of far more importance in Leila's eyes was the sweet smile and soft voice with which the lady acknowledged her new guest.

"You speak Italian?" she said, after the first few sentences of greeting.

Leila replied in the affirmative, and Lady Temple went on in the same language.

"I can speak a little English, and I like my Clarcie to learn it fluently, as she has an English name and is the daughter of an Englishman. But for me," she said, with a sigh, "my earliest and happiest days and my warmest affections were connected with my own dear land and its soft tongue."

She was silent for a few moments, during which she was gazing earnestly at her new acquaintance, and then she turned to Madame di Ballard with a sort of meditative air, as if she scarcely thought that Leila would be aware of being the subject of her remarks.

"Miss Lorraine has something of a foreign air and feature," she said. "There is little, very little of the cold English style about her. It is a merit in my eyes, so do not look alarmed, signora," she went on, as she saw Leila's embarrassed air. "It kills and crushes me to have the rigid hardness of the North against me at every turn, and I could not bear it for Clarcie. So that is well. Madame di Ballard, I am content. I will give the signora a trial. If she pleases Clarcie it will be all that remains. The poor child must not be made miserable."

It was accepted as a dismissal by the "confidential agent," and Madame di Ballard departed, leaving the patroness and the dependent together.

"There, do not look so disapproving at my devotion to my country and my child," said Lady Temple, signing to Leila to come nearer to the fauteuil on which she was reclining.

Leila started. She had certainly never meant

her face to express so clearly her thoughts, though in truth she had scarcely felt discouragement at the prospect of pleasing a capricious and wilful mother and child.

"Indeed, indeed, I did not," she began, but Lady Temple interrupted her.

"Yes, you did, so do not deny it any more than I ever deny my own follies. The truth is that I have had a life of disappointment even in apparent prosperity, and I can only now find comfort in freedom and in the child who is all my own. And I want her to be happy, and she is like me, she cannot be good or content with anyone she dislikes. And I believe she will like you," she went on, reflectively.

"I hope so. I will try that she shall," said the girl, softly.

"Try," oh, that is no use," returned the Italian, quickly. I tried once—twice, and in vain. Once I strove to win the love that ought to have been mine, and then to give it where it ought to have been given, but it was all in vain—yes, all in vain, and Clarice cannot either."

Leila looked as she felt, strangely interested in such a confession from one who was surrounded by all that wealth could give, possessed of name and friends and child. Ah, how the "nameless one" envied, and yet how she pitied her whom she deemed so happy and so rich in fortune's gifts.

"Perhaps you were mistaken," she said, softly. "The love might, perhaps, recently have had the love and yet not know it."

A little smile crossed the lady's lips.

"No, no, no," she said. "I had but too good proof of that. He married another, even though we had been betrothed from early childhood, as is the custom in our country, as you probably know. He was a cousin, and it was always intended that we should unite the title and the wealth of our mutual race. And what was far more uneven, I loved him—yes, not because I was told to do so," she said, with another of the smiles that gave a strange, cynical expression to her soft features—no, it was with the hatred and ardent love that we Italians feel in such intensity. And he must have known it—he did know it. I was not unattractive, and others know I said it, but he did not love me. I tried in vain. And what do you think was the end of it?" she went on, questioningly.

"How can I imagine," said Leila, "save that, as I know, you married another."

"Yes; but not till he had disgraced himself, and forfeited every possible tie that could bind me to him," said Lady Temple, sadly. "He married—aye, and not as he should have done—with the least plea of excuse, save one, suspicious to me. No, it was in a foreign land, and in secrecy and darkness that he took my rival for wife. And then to crown all, he died, and if he did leave children they are all unknown and unacknowledged. So you see I was avenged," she went on, sadly, "and without deed or word of mine."

"And you," pursued Leila, interested in the tale of disappointed love thus singularly confessed, "what did you do?"

"I did as you see. I married also, a wealthy and high-born Englishman, but I was wretched. I could not love an iceberg, even if my heart had been free, and it was not till I was left with my child—my own Clarice, that the chains fell off, and I was not happy but content."

It was a sad revelation of a disappointed, joyless life, and Leila could but accept it as a proof that she was not altogether alone in her hard lot as she sometimes believed. She had been rejected, but then there had been trials of Digby's affection, such as few could have borne with firm constancy, while in this instance, it had been an unrecognised passion that had been crushed and thrown back on an impetuous and intense nature, such as this modern *Giuletta* evidently possessed."

"It was sad—very sad," she murmured, "but still you have had—you still have—something in your child."

"Yes, yes, but she is like her father. She is English in look if not in all things," was the doubting reply, "and it is for that I think you

may understand and manage her. And now, I have seen you I am certain of it," she went on, her eyes rivetted still on Leila's lovely face as she spoke. "You are strangely like him—like him I loved, and it is that which has brought all this so vividly to my mind and opened my heart to tell you my story."

"I am sorry. I fear if it is so I shall only be a source of pain to you," said Leila, fancying it might be that Lady Temple's poor occupied brain saw in all the rest resemblance to him she had so devotedly loved.

"No, that is past. It will be but a bond of sympathy," she said. "After all, it is in the features rather than the expression that you recall him to me. When you speak or smile you are all different. He had not your sweet, sad look, at least, not for me. I know not what it might have been for his English wife," she added, with a quiver of the lip that betrayed the jealous agony of the memory even after all the years that had elapsed.

There was another pause, and then Lady Temple rang a bell and ordered "Miss Temple" to be sent to her. It was a strange anomaly, that mixing up, as it were, of Italian passions, surroundings, and language with the English name and lineage of Sir Francis Temple, and from what Lady Temple said, Leila was fully prepared to see the apparition that presented itself in obedience to her mother's summons.

Clarice Temple entered the room with a slow, calm step, and one that was almost natural at her early age. She certainly was a remarkable contrast to her mother's soft yet passionate nature and mien. Nor was she more like her in feature than in style or expression. Clarice was fair, even to cold colourlessness; her eyes were a light blue, and her hair a pale brown; her figure tall and slight, but without the undulating grace or lithe, springy activity that became her early youth.

In short, it seemed to Leila that Lady Temple had scarcely more to love and sympathise with in the child she deoted on so fondly than in the husband who appeared to have been so uncongenial with her nature.

Clarice advanced with unmoved composure to be presented to the attendant governess on whom so much of her happiness and comfort would depend, but still Leila fancied that she could detect a quick and not altogether amiable or promising expression in the girl's face when her mother called her to her side. There was more of jealous suspicion than youthful confidence in the sharply cut and passionate young features when Lady Temple placed her hand in Leila's half extended fingers.

"Clarice, my dear, this is the young lady who will attend to you in future," she said. "I mean that she will superintend your lessons, and your comfort out of the school hours, and I am sure you will find her pleasing and agreeable, my child," she added, with an anxious inquiring look at her daughter as she spoke.

Clarice did not allow her hand to rest in the soft palm of her new attendant, but withdrew it with a cold shrinking from the contact.

"I hope so, mamma. Your last choice was not at all a happy one. I shall soon be able to tell you," she said, in a hard voice, all unlike the soft rich tones of her Italian mother.

"True, carissima, true," said Lady Temple, soothingly, "but you will try to make yourself happy, my love, for it seems to me that it is impossible you can have anyone who will be able and willing to combine so much that you need? There, show her your apartments, my love, which she and you will inhabit, and then you will become better acquainted," she went on, doubtfully.

Clarice gave a haughty inclination of the head, and then fled from the room, leaving Leila to follow at her leisure, without taking the slightest notice of her movements. It was not till they had mounted the broad marble stairs of the palazzo, which Lady Temple inherited from her father, that the heiress vouchsafed any indication that she was aware of the presence of her new attendant.

"This is my sitting-room, which you will share

with me," she said, "at least save when I wish to be alone, when you will be so good as to retire to your own apartment. And that is my bedroom and dressing-room attached," she added, carelessly, indicating the chamber with her hand. "You will not have to do anything to them except take care of my dress and ornaments, and assist me in dressing. The rest will be done by the servants."

It was an ungracious and haughty introduction to the humiliating duties Leila had undertaken, but it had to be accepted and endured in silence, and the graceful gesture that indicated Miss Lorraine's comprehension of her position was more dignified a rebuke than could have been given by the slightest indication of displeasure.

Then she at once passed into the other room of the suite and occupied herself in examining all that belonged to her new position. It was at least safety and shelter as it so appeared, and Leila strove hard to bring down her spirit to the necessary patience and submission.

"I am so young," she mused, "so very young, and I am afraid I shall not die yet."

And then came the bitter thought that Geoffrey Sabine would believe her guilty when he heard the tale of flight; and yet what did it signify? She would not be likely to see him more, and, besides, what link could there be between him and herself—the nameless and rejected one, and it was better for her peace that she should never see him more.

She little dreamed that at the very moment when she was thus assuming the duties of a humble dependent her once betrothed lover was offering his vows afresh to one whose rank was perhaps even higher, if her attractions were not greater, than the whilom daughter of the Lorraines.

It was the day after Digby Mayfield had received Lord Dunallan's scornful rejection of his challenge, and his resentment was certainly as fiery as his admiration for the beautiful girl who had been the cause of the insult he had so signally failed to avenge.

It was a galling sequel to his former betrothal with Leila Lorraine, and his passion rose to fever heat as he mused over the next step to be taken in the exasperating position. Lord Dunallan's character for courage and spirit was too high for him to hope to blast it by proclaiming him "coward." He had signalled himself in more than one daring feat during his past life, and Digby had a tolerable conviction that he would court ridicule himself by attempting to cast shame on his rival.

One means of revenge alone remained. He would strive and without delay to snatch the prize from the insolent Dunallan, who thus heaped contempt on insult, and thus at once vindicate his own pretensions and punish the man who had so cavalierly despised them. And the opportunity presented itself even sooner than he had anticipated.

Tickets were offered to him for one of the last and most recherché fetes of the waning season—one of those where interest and not money wins admission to the bewildering scene, and armed with these as credentials, and trusting to his good fortune to give him an opportunity of making use of the admittance they would command, he drove off to the house that had seen his humiliation, and which he trusted now might be the scene of his triumph.

Lady Agatha was at home, and the exceptionally early hour of his visit was a tolerable pledge that she would be alone. A brief pencilled word on his card informed her of the urgent character of his request for admission, and a message came after some harassing delay that "Lady Agatha would see the marquis for a few minutes, though she was not receiving that day from a slight indisposition."

She looked a most lovely and graceful invalid, if such she chose to be considered, and the more simple and negligent character of her costume gave a more touching and feminine character to her proud beauty.



[A NEW PATRONESS.]

"You are most gracious to admit me," said the marquis, regarding her with anxious tenderness. "Are you really seriously suffering, dear Lady Agatha?"

She gave a languid smile.

"Oh, no. Only a little nervous, I believe," she said, "and a slight headache which makes me inclined to be a sullen recluse for the day."

"And you have made me an exception," he said, with a gleam of pleasure in his eyes.

"Only on the belief in your good faith," she said, warningly, holding up her fan. "You assured me you really had a reason for seeing me."

"Certainly I have, to lay these humbly for your acceptance," he said, producing the tickets, "and yet to present a yet more important petition to your consideration."

She glanced at them with a look of satisfaction. She had felt rather piqued at the absence of any admission to this much talked of fête.

"Thank you, Lord Mayfield, I will accept them," she said. "There are so few things left just now that it is rather refreshing to see the dying embers of the season woke up to a blaze. Yes, I will go, unless I am prohibited, which is not very likely," she went on, with a smile of proud security.

"And my next offering, my more anxious petition, will that find as gracious a consideration?" said the marquis, with real graciousness of manner and tone.

"How is it possible to say without knowledge of its nature? I never make blind promises," she said, with a faint blush that against her will betrayed the suspicion she entertained of the nature of the request.

"Can you not guess its nature?" he returned, with the same unaffected agitation of manner.

"What can it be? Am I to promise you for the first dance, or accept a bouquet for the cessation? That is the most probable solution of the mystery," she said, half concealing her features with the essence bottle that lay on the table near her.

"No, Lady Agatha. It is a far more momentous request, a far more pleasant offering, of which I am afraid even to speak. Yet it must be done, and I must pluck up courage to risk my fate, however abruptly. Lady Agatha, I have perhaps a rank and fortune to offer you that is not altogether unworthy of you; but when I look at you, all surrounded by smiles and admirers, and then at my humble self, I scarcely dare hope. Is it possible, can you listen to what is at least true, devoted love—to the heartfelt promise of a future devoted to you?" he went on, in a broken voice that pleaded for him more strongly than words.

Lady Agatha was taken by surprise. There was no doubt of it. In truth, with all the habitual attention and homage she received, she scarcely did distinguish between seeming pretensions and the more idle admiration of the hour, and she could scarcely decide whether she was most pleased or perplexed by the unlooked for proposal.

Thoughts at once contending and unanswerable rushed over her mind during the brief interval before she gave her answer. Lord Dunallan's cold, proud suit, the inferiority of his wealth and rank to that of the young marquis, the humble and respectful tone of the suit of the latter, were rapidly weighed like scales in her mind.

It would be a worthy revenge, a coup d'état, that would fall with sudden force on the culprit's head. If he did really love her it would be but a blow to the pride that could not have borne with her lawful pretensions. If not it would vindicate her dignity and give her a man devoted to her as her gifts of nature and fortune deserved.

It was a dangerous moment for both, nay, it may fairly be said for all three of those concerned. A wavering in the balance, a turn in the scales, might be for the weal or woe of herself and others. Her colour varied bewitchingly on her cheeks as she wavered, and Digby Mayfield could watch with his own interpretations

the workings of the mind that was at that moment deciding on its own and his future.

It was a thrilling silence for a few moments, during which the beatings of each other's hearts could plainly be distinguished; but it came to an end. Lady Agatha's lips trembled painfully, her colour varied, and then a second time the words rose to her reluctant tongue. It was a brief answer that formed itself, and that at last found vent in words.

"Yes, I will trust you, Lord Mayfield."

The enraptured suitor could scarcely credit his own happiness as he listened.

"Again! again! Say it again! Give me but a pressure of the hand, a smile, if you will not speak," poured out from his lips.

"Yes," was murmured, and then the small fingers closed softly on his hand, and a smile came slyly from the upturned features.

It was complete now. He could no longer doubt.

"I may speak to the marquis, may I not?" he asked.

She inclined her head. It was a prayer spoken in a different tone to that of Egbert Dunallan. He pressed her hand to his lips, and lingered one instant to give her a last chance of retracting her permission; but the restraining word did not come, and the next instant Lord Mayfield had sought the library, where the marquis passed most of his early mornings, and in a few straightforward words had preferred his request. A brief but important colloquy followed, but to the lasting and momentous effect that Lord Mayfield was accepted as the future son-in-law of the Marquis of St. Colomb.

Lord Dunallan had lost the betrothed whom he had wooed with but a half-hearted affection, and the lover who had rejected Leila Loraine in her adverse fortunes was the formal and accepted lover of Lady Agatha St. Ives. Such were the turns of Fortune's wheel in a few brief months with Leila Loraine and the man she had so loved and honoured.

(To be Continued.)



[A ROYAL ENVOY.]

ROB ROY MACGREGOR;
OR,
THE HIGHLAND CHIEFTAIN.
A ROMANCE OF SCOTLAND.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Amy Robsart," "Breaking the Charm," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE KING'S SIGN MANUAL.

In the midst was seen
A lady of majestic mien.

SHELLEY.

RASHLEIGH was never happy unless he was plotting. He saw that Rob Roy was a friend of Frank, and he had received a letter from him in Glasgow, telling him that if he did not give up the money and securities he had taken from London, he would be compelled to do so.

That threat at once made Rashleigh Rob's enemy, and he determined to get The Macgregor out of the way. For that purpose he sent for Morris, who had a post under the Government as a guager, and they met at Rashleigh's lodgings one morning after breakfast.

"Morris," said Rashleigh, "you have known me for some time, and I think I have given you reason to believe that I am your friend, for it was chiefly through my influence with certain friends in this city that you obtained the post of guager which you now hold.

"That is true, sir," replied Morris, "and if an opportunity of showing my gratitude arises, it shall not be said that I was found wanting."

"It has arrived."

"How?" Morris inquired, in some surprise.

"Rob Roy is a dangerous man. He has sworn to have your life and mine?"

"What harm have I done him?"

"I might ask the same question," replied Rashleigh. "However, the fact remains the same. We must protect ourselves. I can rely upon my information. Now, what I want you to do is this. Send a letter to Rob Roy at the Clachan of Aberfoil asking him to meet you with not more than a dozen followers, as you have important business to transact with him, and will come alone and unattended."

"Well!" ejaculated the guager.

"Major Galbraith is in the field with the Lennox Militia, who are tired of Rob's raids and have sworn to capture him. He will come to meet you at say the Rocky Burn, a stream ten miles from here. Galbraith shall be informed by me of the rendezvous, and will swoop down on him like a hawk on its prey. We shall bag the fox and no harm will come to you."

Morris seemed somewhat reluctant to execute the task which was imposed upon him.

"I would rather, sir," he exclaimed, "that you had selected someone else to carry out your plan."

"There is no one else I can trust, nor one who can so well execute my purpose. Sit down and write the letter. Say you have seen Miss Vernon; that bait will catch him."

Morris very unwillingly took pen in hand and wrote:

"TO THE MACGREGOR,

"Worthy chief, I send you greeting, and beg that you will give me a meeting at the Rocky Burn two hours after daybreak on the third day from the receipt of this, as I have that to communicate which you will find is to your interest to hear. I have seen Miss Vernon, and need not say more, as a nod is as good as a wink to the horse that is blind. I shall be unattended, so you need not bring a large following. I am, your honour's obedient, humble servant to command.

"S. MORRIS, Guager."

Taking the letter, Rashleigh read it and nodded his head in approval.

"That will do," he said. "Mind you keep the appointment. I will do the rest."

Morris went to his home in dire distress trembling for the result, as he had the strongest possible dread of Rob, well knowing his unscrupulous and lawless nature. The letter was despatched to the clachan by a trusty messenger, whom Rashleigh selected and fully instructed as to the duty he had to perform. He did not doubt that the outlaw would come, and he was equally sure that if he did he would be taken. At the same time he wrote to Major Galbraith, informing him of the trap he had laid for the freebooter, and advising him to form an ambush at the Rocky Burn.

The day before the plot was to be carried into execution Rashleigh was poring over some maps of the country and adding up rows of figures, as if he was studying the best place for the exiled prince to effect a landing on the coast of Scotland, and reckoning up the number of men that the various disaffected Highland chiefs could put in the field against the troops of King George. A serving girl entered the apartment and announced that a lady wished to see him.

"Who is she?" asked Rashleigh, astonished, for he had no female acquaintances that he was aware of.

"A braw bonnie lassie," replied the domestic, "but she did not gie any name."

"Let her come in."

Presently the door opened again, and Diana Vernon made her appearance.

"Ah! my sweet cousin!" exclaimed Rashleigh, "I did not think you were so far north, but I am glad to see you nevertheless."

Diana sat down on a chair which he politely offered her.

"Perhaps your rapture will be moderated when you know the object of my visit," she replied.

"I can never be sorry to have seen you."

"We shall see, Cousin Rashleigh. I am here

to demand the notes, securities and papers belonging to the firm of Osbaldistone and Company which you have feloniously abstracted and illegally hold!"

The black look which so often disfigured Rashleigh's countenance crossed his expressive features.

"What if I refuse to comply with your modest request?" he asked.

"You will not do so."

"Diana," he said, "why should you interest yourself so greatly in this young man's behalf? Francis Osbaldistone can never be taught to you."

"He knows that from my own lips, but I wish to see him righted."

"You are perfectly well aware why I took these securities and monies," Rashleigh exclaimed, earnestly; "and to ask me to give them up is to seriously imperil the cause which is dear to the hearts of both of us."

"All that I am not prepared to admit. The cause of King James will not be jeopardised by saving the honour and credit of the Osbaldistones," replied Diana.

"Let me reason with you," he urged. "These Highland lairds will not fight unless they are paid for it. They must have money, and I distinctly refuse to accede to your demand. It would be madness to do so, and you must conquer your sentimental weakness in favour of Francis."

Diana coloured up to the eyes.

"How dare you talk to me like that!" she exclaimed. "You have no right to do so. I simply do not wish to see the young man's father ruined."

"Ruined he shall be!" Rashleigh enjoined, emphatically.

"Not by you at any rate. Give up the papers!" she said, with an air of authority.

"Never!"

Diana, at this bold defiance, produced a sheet of paper on which some lines were written. It was signed James Rex. Rashleigh started and turned pale at the sight of this potential document, over which he hastily cast his eyes.

"What is this?" he gasped.

"The King's sign manual, dear cousin!" answered Diana, triumphantly. "Knowing your tenacity, I sent over to France and his majesty has forwarded you his royal command to deliver the papers in question to one Diana Vernon, who now sits before you."

"What if I refuse?"

"In that case you lose all hope of ever regaining his royal highness's favour. And how much that is worth to you I presume you are better acquainted than I am."

Rashleigh grated his teeth savagely together, and fidgeted uneasily in his chair.

"You are checkmated, cousin, and had best yield with a good grace," said Miss Vernon.

For some little time Rashleigh remained silent, and it was evident that a deep struggle was going on in his breast. At length he gave way, for he believed in the exiled King's cause. He had everything to hope from him in the future, and dared not offend his majesty. By sending over to France Diana had completely outwitted him.

"I obey the King's commands," he exclaimed. "But mark me well, Diana, you have made me a still more bitter enemy of Francis Osbaldistone!"

"You may be his enemy. I am his friend, and we shall see who will triumph—the evil genius or the good fairy," she rejoined.

Going to an escritoire he unlocked it with a silver key and took from its recesses a packet which he handed to Miss Vernon.

"There you will find all you require," he said. "And now, perhaps, you will condescend to inform me where you are staying in this ancient City of Glasgow?"

"That concerns me alone," answered Diana, eagerly opening the packet to satisfy herself that he had really given her what she was in search of.

In vain he pressed her to be more communicative. All she would say was that she was well protected, and with powerful friends.

With a mocking bow and a provoking smile she left him to nourish his evil thoughts, which were rendered acutely disagreeable by what had occurred.

He was baffled if not beaten, for he saw that the credit of Mr. Osbaldistone would be re-established, and Frank probably restored to his father's favour, for the important service he would be able to render him as soon as Diana gave him the valuable packet she had just possessed herself of. The next day he was up betimes and went to visit Morris, whom he found already bestirring his horse to go and keep the appointment he had made with Rob Roy at Rocky Burn.

"Ah! you are early astir," he said.

"Yes," replied the gauger. "When I have work in hand I never let the grass grow under my feet, though I would rather ride fifty miles in another direction."

"Tut!" exclaimed Rashleigh, "you are faint hearted. No harm will befall you. It will be a feather in your cap to take the outlaw, and harkie, Morris, if you come across young Francis Osbaldistone and get a chance to put a bullet in him without being seen, I will give you a hundred pounds English."

Morris grinned in a ghastly manner.

"You deal quickly with your enemies," he remarked. "My word, sir, I would not like to fall foul of you."

"I can hate better than I can love," replied Rashleigh, gnawing his nether lip.

"If there is no one looking, and I see the gallant, and his back is turned towards me, I'll earn the money, sir," continued Morris, "though I doubt if I shall come across him."

The time for starting being now arrived they shook hands, and the gauger trotted quickly out of the city, Rashleigh turning on his heel and sullenly seeking his lodgings.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CAPTURE OF THE OUTLAW.

All must perish.
The race of Hengist is gone.
The name of Horra is no more.

It was with considerable trepidation that Morris proceeded to the rendezvous, but he was buoyed up with the certainty that Major Galbraith and his large body of Lennox Militia would be in hiding and surround the famous outlaw before he could do him any harm.

The morning was cold and cheerless; one of those moist, penetrating mists, so common in Scotland, emitted a heavy dew almost like rain, and Morris was wet to the skin before he had gone half the distance. It seemed as if the sky was weeping at the deed of treachery which was about to be performed, and all Nature had shrouded itself in gloom.

The gauger was well acquainted with the country, having often had occasion to travel among the hills and glens, and he reached the Rocky Burn in due course. It was a black, sullen-looking stream which glided through a rocky channel—hence its name, and occasionally brawled and bubbled into white foam over hidden boulders.

Taking his stand in a conspicuous position he looked around him, but could not see far owing to the mist, yet as well as he could distinguish he was alone. All at once the sun came out and the mist lifted as if by magic. A tall figure, followed by a dozen men, was now seen approaching, and one glance sufficed to show that it was Rob Roy himself.

Waving his hand to his attendant clansmen, The Macgregor caused them to remain stationary and advanced alone to Morris. When they were within speaking distance, he exclaimed:

"What would you wish me?"

Morris was at a loss what to say. He looked round in confusion for the Militia, but did not perceive any sign of them. A heavy sweat broke out all over him, and he felt as if he should fall from his horse. In this emergency he had to invent something, and replied that

Miss Vernon wanted to know when and where she could see his honour.

"And is that all you have brought me here to say?" cried Rob. "By heaven! I could break every bone in your skin. Miss Vernon knows fu' weel where to find me if she is not gone clane daft."

"She has heard, honoured sir, that you are being hunted, and perhaps could not venture into Glasgow."

"All the mair reason why she suld not bring me out of my stronghold into the plains. Ah!" added Rob, "what is that?"

A note sounded on a bugle and in an instant the moor was alive with militiamen on foot and on horseback.

"Betrayed!" cried Rob Roy, "and by this worm. He shall die the death though!"

Drawing his claymore he rushed upon Morris and would have cut him down had not the gauger discreetly put spurs to his horse and galloped off as hard as he could go. In his hurry and excitement he did not stop to look in what direction he was going, and careered over the moor in the very teeth of the attendant Highlanders.

They comprehended the situation in a moment, and saw that Morris had been the decoy who had brought their chief into the trap. Rob was cleverly surrounded by over two hundred men under Major Galbraith and Invershalloch. The Highlanders would have gladly gone to his rescue and laid down their lives for him, but it was useless to fight against such odds. Rob himself did not desire it, for he shouted in a stentorian voice:

"Fly to the clachan! Let my wife know I am taken! Rouse the clans! Away!"

Hearing this they contented themselves with seizing the wretched Morris, whom they caused to dismount and hurried off through paths only known to themselves, so that the militiamen were unable to follow them. The cowardly and treacherous Morris was terribly alarmed, for he gave himself up as lost, and with great show of reason, as the Macgregors were not likely to show him much mercy.

Whether his captors were taking him he knew not. They would answer no questions, and turned a deaf ear to his supplications that they would set him at liberty. Meanwhile The Macgregor saw himself completely surrounded by the Militia. Two hundred carbines and matchlocks were directed at his body, and he could not as he contemplated cut his way out.

"Yield!" cried Galbraith, cantering up on a strongly made Galloway horse.

"Not to you, Endrick!" replied Rob. "I yield to numbers."

Invershalloch now joined the major, and to him the outlaw handed his claymore.

"There is no kith or kin between either of us," said Rob, "but I surrender to you, Invershalloch, for I canna forget that we have crackit mony a pint stoup of Hieland whisky together, to say naething of the flasks of Rhenish and French claret."

"Ay," replied Invershalloch, "that was when you were an honest mon, Macgregor."

"Who made me what I am?"

"I ken you have your wrangs. The English burnt your house and turned you and your bairns out into the snaw. Yet that was no reason why you suld harry our cattle."

"Let it pass. I am caught like a rat in a trap," exclaimed Rob, "and if it is his fate, a Macgregor knows how to dea. Where are ye gangin wi' me?"

"To Stirling Castle," answered Major Galbraith.

Rob's eyes lighted up with a subdued fire, which quickly died out. He was afraid that they were going to shoot or hang him out of hand, but there was hope yet, as it was some distance to Stirling, and they had to traverse a difficult country which was swarming with his friends. In fact, lawless as he was, Rob had more friends than enemies in the Highlands, and there were many among his captors that day who would have been glad to see him make his escape.

"One word mair," said Rob Roy.

"Away with him!" cried Helen Macgregor. Morris was instantly dragged to the edge of the cliff which overhung the rock.

"Save me! Save me!" he yelled. "I cannot die like this with all my sins upon my head. Give me a few hours for repentance!"

No attention was paid to his frantic appeals for mercy. A stone was tied up in a plaid and wrapped tightly around his body. Its weight would have sufficed to sink an ox. Exerting their Herculean strength, the Highlanders lifted him up and threw him into the lake with as little compunction as they would have displayed in drowning a kitten.

In The Macgregor's country the word of the chief was law to these simple-minded people, and in his absence the slightest wish of his wife was obeyed with equal docility. The black, murky waters closed over the head of the gauger, and the rugged rocks returned in mocking echoes the last despairing cry of the wretch who had paid so dearly for his treachery. When the tragedy was complete an awful silence reigned, which was unbroken by either Frank, the bailie, or Captain Thornton, who were all standing together. Helen herself was the first to speak.

"You are an Osbaldistone?" she said to Frank.

"I have the honour to be one," replied Frank, "and I have no reason to blush for my connection, save and except on account of my cousin Rashleigh, whose conduct has not been conducive to the maintenance of our fair fame."

"Have you any complicity in the intrigues of this Rashleigh?"

"None whatever. I give you my word as a gentleman on that point. So far from wishing to betray your husband, I may say that we are friends, and I would serve him if it were in my power."

"Are you acquainted with Galbraith and Invershalloch?"

Frank intimated that he had met them, and hinted that he should doubtless be well received if he was again to come in contact with them.

"It is well," continued Helen. "I will have you conducted to their body of Militia, and you can tell them from me that if any ill comes to my husband there shall be weeping and wailing along the whole countryside. I will kill the wives of those men who are cruelly taking The Macgregor to his doom, and you can add that if he is not surrendered in two hours after your arrival, I will send them the dead bodies of this English captain and this Glasgow bailie who has the impudence to claim kinship with me!"

"I will take your message, madame," replied Frank, with a bow.

Captain Thornton stepped forward.

"You will oblige me, Mr. Osbaldistone," said he, "by conveying a few words from myself to Major Galbraith. I am an English officer, and I fear nothing that this savage woman can do to me. Unfortunately I and my poor fellows have been led into a trap. We have suffered a heavy loss and been completely defeated, yet I trust that the Lennox Militia will do their duty and think nothing of me. I deserve my fate whatever it may be, and my life is not of such consequence that it should be spared in order that a noted criminal like Rob Roy should be set at liberty to burn, plunder, and slay once more."

Frank could not help regarding this gallant officer with admiration, but the bailie on the contrary was much disconcerted.

"Hoot, mon!" he cried, "you're nae gude friend of mine if ye tak any such fule's message as that. Gang to Galbraith of Endrick and tell him that Nicoll Jarvie, a worthy bailie of Glasgow, whilk he kens fu' weel, mair by token that he's borrowed siller frae him and can have the worth of another bond, so be that he wants it, and deil doot him for that, seeing that he is a Hiellander, an' as pur as a mouse that lives in the Church of St. Mungo. Tell him that I want to gang hame and he'd best let Rob come up to his glen and save worse trouble than there is a' ready. As for the gauger, least said soonest mended, and Heaven speed you on your errand."

Frank listened to the curious and conflicting orders he had received, promising to do his best for each and all, but chiefly to effect the liberation of Rob Roy if it was possible for any argument or representation of his to do so. Helen Macgregor called Dougal and instructed him to conduct Frank across the country through paths only known to Highlanders who like himself had been born and bred in this wild district. Accordingly they started, it being now well on towards noon. They partook of a slight repast before they moved, as it was doubtful when they would next get a chance of eating anything, and in a short time they had left the glen behind.

Frank felt assured of his own freedom, for he was under no obligation to return to Mistress Macgregor, though he felt that he would not be acting honourably in leaving the bailie to his fate. For Captain Thornton he cared little or nothing. That officer had behaved in a high handed manner to him, and as he had got himself into the scrape in which he was, he resolved to let him get out of it the best way he could; but with regard to Mr. Jarvie his feelings were different, and much as he wished to be at liberty, he made up his mind to go back to this glen, no matter what the result to himself might be, if he did not succeed in effecting the liberation of the outlaw.

Dougal was very reticent, scarcely speaking a word. It seemed as if the news of The Macgregor's capture had stunned him, and that he was heartbroken by the sudden and unexpected shock. It was really more than the faithful fellow could bear; his looks evidenced the distress he felt.

"You are not well," remarked Frank. "Were you hurt in the fight this morning?"

"Na, na," replied the creature, shaking his shock head of red, unkempt hair. "She's weel enouch; it's a heart that's bleedin' sair for his kinsman, but we'll be in the track of the soldiers, I'm thinkin'."

He stooped down, putting his ear to the ground, and having heard certain sounds which were inaudible to his companion, he started off again at a sharp pace. Presently he stopped short, and Frank, who was close behind him, heard the clang of a carbine and the usual challenge of a trooper, to which he gave the usual answer. The next minute they were surrounded by the men of the Lennox Militia, and he saw the tall forms of Galbraith and Invershalloch galloping towards him.

(To be Continued.)

THE FORCED MARRIAGE;

—OR—

JEW AND GENTILE.

CHAPTER XX.

"No, sir," Mark Upton's legal counsellor had said. "You cannot administer upon Edward Aveling's estate until the claims of his widow are satisfied. You say she has declined pressing her claims—a most unusual resolve, by the way—but that makes no difference. The property is hers until she signs it away to another."

"But that she refuses absolutely to do," replied Upton. "I proposed it to her, but she positively declined putting her name to any paper whatever. She's like the dog in the manger: she won't eat, nor let anyone else eat."

"Not a very complimentary comparison, but possibly a just one," returned the lawyer. "The case stands just as I have stated it to you. You can go on rebuilding Ashurst, if you like, but you must understand that you do so at your own expense, for you cannot legally charge the Aveling estate with one shilling of the cost."

This conversation, already partially detailed in a former chapter, would have discouraged

Upton beyond measure, had there not been an announcement connected therewith which strangely exhilarated him. The lawyer told him that Holmes had discovered the old woman towards whom his thoughts so persistently turned.

Therefore, the next morning—the very one, in fact, upon which Rachael Aveling and Mrs. Markham left Ashurst—Upton posted with all haste to town to confer with Holmes and learn from his own lips the truth of the lawyer's statement.

But this journey was utterly fruitless, for Holmes's course of life was so erratic, he changed his name and residence so often, his haunts were so obscure, that after a long and fatiguing search Upton was forced to return without seeing him, and thus it seemed as though he was ever fated to be baffled in his purposes.

Days, weeks, even several months went by, and still Holmes made no sign, and Upton, chafing with impatience, at last began to fear that the desperado—for such in reality he was—had lost his life in some bold adventure and that the discovery he had made had perished with him.

This thought almost staggered the master of Ashurst, for between himself and Holmes there existed certain sympathetic ties which the former felt that he could not forego. The man had become an essential part of his life, and without him many of his cherished schemes would fall to the ground.

It was while this doubt as to Holmes ever appearing again had possession of his mind that Upton planned that cruel project of accusing the innocent Rachael of causing her husband's death; but ere he had taken the first step towards the execution of this design Holmes gave a sign.

He was alive; he would soon present himself at their old tryst in the quarry cabin, and there Upton shortly met the man. But what a change had taken place in the desperado! For a long time a fugitive from justice, he had at last been tracked just as he was leaving the city on a mission to Ashurst.

He was on the eve of arrest, a desperate struggle ensued, in which, though effecting his escape, he had been severely wounded. He had strength sufficient to drag himself to one of his haunts, and there for weeks he had hovered on the verge of the grave. At last, somewhat recovering, his first effort, when able to stir abroad, was to apprise Upton of his existence and appoint a meeting.

So it fell out that at this rendezvous Upton heard that which he so ardently longed to know, and the next night an event took place at Ashurst which filled the domestics there with much wonder and caused no little speculation among them.

A close carriage drove to the door late in the evening, and from it there alighted, with much difficulty, a tall female figure, wrapped in a long cloak, and wearing a bonnet and veil, which effectually concealed her features.

Her coming had been expected by Upton, for at the first sound of the carriage wheels upon the road he flew to the door, and dismissing the servant who waited there, received the newcomer alone.

He assisted her to descend, he guided her uncertain footsteps within the house, after first exchanging a few hasty words with a person who remained within the carriage and who had evidently brought the stranger to Ashurst.

Then, with eager haste, Upton led the way to those rooms once occupied by his cousin's secluded bride, and here, in the lighted chamber, he stood face to face with the woman he had so long and, until now, so unsuccessfully sought.

She stood for a moment within the little parlour like one dazed. Her bonnet and veil had fallen back upon her shoulders, leaving exposed the grey hair, the wrinkled skin, the restless eyes.

She looked about the room wildly for a few moments, seeming to seek some object which

she missed. Then turning to Upton, who stood regarding her with the keenest scrutiny, said:

"Where is the wife who knelt there before the fire? She must come again and warm my hands, and speak to me as she did that other night. She stood there at the window while I was shivering in the wet and cold outside. She held the great dog back when he would have sprung at me. Where is she, I say?" and she turned her gaze upon Upton, demanding a reply.

"She is not here," he answered: "yet perhaps if you will tell me something about her I will bring her to you. You came to see her that time that you speak of, did you not?"

The woman laughed.

"I came to see her?" she repeated. "No, I did not. I came to see someone else different from her, yet I was not sorry to see her too, and to show her something which I brought with me."

"What was it?" asked Upton.

"Ah, what was it, indeed!" said the woman, throwing a quick, suspicious glance towards the questioner. "I have it here safe enough, but whether I'll show it to you or not I cannot tell."

Upton did not urge the woman further, he saw that she was weak, wearied, a little unstrung, perhaps, so with his own hands he divested her of her cloak, made her sit before the fire, and caused her to understand that the comforts which surrounded her were hers as long as she chose to enjoy them.

"Ha!" she replied to these last assurances. "Then you have come to your senses at last, have you, and you've made up your mind to be just to the poor old woman who only asked for her due?"

"Another time, my good woman—to-morrow, when we are rested, we will talk about that," replied Upton. "Think of me as your friend, tell me your troubles and I will see that they are removed."

The woman looked askance at him as she sat with her feet upon the fender and her head resting, helpless from fatigue, upon the back of the chair into which she had fallen.

Upton also looked at her from under his beetling brows, and at that moment his confidential servant entered the room bearing a tray amply supplied with everything a wearied traveller's appetite could crave.

He remained while his strange guest partook of such refreshment as she desired, and then took leave, bidding her make herself as comfortable as possible, wishing her at the same time a good night's rest.

But he did not secure for himself the rest which he enjoined upon her, for with Thomas as his assistant they carefully watched the windows and doors of those two apartments, fearful lest the occupant they had been at such pains to secure might elude them in one of those wandering moods to which Upton correctly surmised she might be subject.

The next morning proved that their watch might have been dispensed with, for the woman, exhausted by the journey of the preceding day, was quite unable to leave her bed, and it was some days before she recovered sufficiently to move about her room.

Yet Upton still found it a difficult matter to so win her confidence that she would impart the knowledge he believed she possessed. Sometimes under the influence of his persuasive voice and manner it seemed as if her lips would be unsealed, but the next moment she would turn from him with resolute reticence.

Upton almost despaired of achieving any result from this longed-for discovery, and many times he was tempted to send for Holmes to return his silent guest to the place from which he had brought her.

But at length his patience and perseverance were rewarded. The woman finally spoke, and what she revealed so far transcended the expectations of her hearer that he almost trembled at the recollection of his foolish impulse to dismiss her.

It was one wild, stormy night when the two sat together, Upton revolving in his mind what further effort he could make to wrest from this woman's keeping the secret he knew she possessed, she sitting quiet, her lips compressed with stern thought as she listened to the wild howling, the fierce beating, of the storm outside. Suddenly, without raising her eyes, she said:

"This is Zaidee's birth-night."

"And who is Zaidee," asked Upton, suddenly feeling that an unusual mood was upon the woman and that through its influence he might profit much.

"She was my daughter—my only child," the woman replied.

Upton longed to question his companion further, but he instinctively refrained lest he might spoil all by his impatience.

"She was my daughter," the woman repeated, after a long pause, during which she sat thoughtful and still. "My only child. She should by right be here instead of in the cold grave where she lies to-night."

"Here in Ashurst, do you mean?" Upton ventured to ask.

"Yes, in Ashurst, as its mistress in the place of that other one—that girl who knelt there before the fire and urged me to stay and rest myself that stormy night so long a time ago."

"If this is true," returned Upton, warily, "why did she stay away?"

"Why?" the woman demanded, her eyes flashing with indignant fire. "Because then there lived in Ashurst an old man whose pride was such that his son dared not bring home a poor girl as his wife!"

"My good woman," said Upton, throwing all the sympathy he could command into his voice, "you must certainly misunderstand Mr. Aveling's character, a more kind-hearted, benevolent gentleman never lived."

"Would his own son have traduced him to a stranger," retorted the woman. "No, whatever falsehoods Edward Aveling may have told us,—and heaven knows he told enough!—I believe he was truthful when he said that his father would disown him if he brought a wife home without his consent."

"So did he keep the marriage secret," queried Upton, half mystified by the woman's words and quite unable to imagine what revelations might be in store for him.

"Yes," the woman replied. "He kept the marriage secret and broke my poor child's heart. The villain tried to throw her off, he pretended that he had been betrayed into it when he was not himself, he ill-treated my poor girl, so I threatened to come to Ashurst and declare his villany to his father, but he frightened me so I dared not. Once I came here to tell it all. I was wild with fury, but—"

She suddenly stopped and resumed her steady gaze into the fire. Upton's heart almost stood still, his interest in the woman's words was so great. What was this marriage of which his companion spoke? Was he about to fathom another instance of his dead cousin's folly? How had it happened that he, the confidant, the encourager, aye, oftentimes the originator, of young Aveling's dissipations, had never suspected or discovered this alleged marriage? Another thought suddenly crossed Upton's mind.

"Madame," he said, leaning forward and touching the brooding woman on the arm, "if it would not pain you too much, tell me when your daughter died."

She started and looked into the eager face of the questioner with a puzzled glance.

"Of what are you speaking?" she said, coldly.

"Of your daughter Zaidee," he returned, "of the Mrs. Aveling who never had her rights in this house where she should have lived happily and contentedly."

"Ah, you think so, do you," said the woman, brightening and turning eagerly upon her questioner. "You think, too, that Zaidee was ill-treated?"

"Yes, ill-treated and defrauded," assented Upton, heartily. "But is it too late to do some-

thing for her memory? Would it not gratify you if your daughter's marriage could be acknowledged?"

"Hush!" the woman cried in a whisper. "There's another one about this place. She will hear us and spoil our plans," and she looked furtively around as if expecting to see a figure emerge from the dark shadows in the remote parts of the room.

"Never fear, my dear woman," said Upton, soothingly. "There is no one here to hear or interrupt us. Tell me something more about your daughter. Believe me, if you had come to me in those days of which you speak you would not now be sitting so sad and lonely."

His sympathising assurances had their full effect.

"When did the marriage take place?" he continued.

The woman produced from her bosom a packet folded in an oil silk covering. She opened it, and in silence drew forth a paper which she held out to her companion. Strangely excited, Mark Upton took it and eagerly possessed himself of its contents.

It was a marriage certificate duly signed and witnessed, the contracting parties being Edward Aveling, whose signature, though uncertain and wavering Upton had no difficulty in recognising, and Zaidee Picheron. Twice—three times—Upton read this document from beginning to end.

It was dated many years previously, and the reader's hand fell heavily upon his lap, as even over his hardened nature there swept the conviction that his wild young cousin had far surpassed him in crime; for had he not deliberately and consciously contracted a second marriage while the first was in force? Yet to assure himself upon this point, he turned again to the woman and said:

"When did you say your daughter died?"

"It was eight months ago to-night."

Yes, it was even as Upton suspected. The other marriage certificate of which he had himself secured possession antedated the death of this first wife. Edward Aveling, in marrying the Jewess, had committed one of the gravest crimes against the laws of his country!

Upton drew his breath quickly as this fact was confirmed, for how much depended upon this discovery; how many mystifications it elucidated, how many perplexities it swept away!

He could not help congratulating himself upon his own shrewdness in so fully trusting his intuitions; for had he disregarded them, had he given up his quest for this woman, the discovery he now made would never have been achieved! But there was more to learn, if further knowledge could be secured.

"You once came to Ashurst, you say?"

The woman assented by a silent nod.

"Did you come on behalf of your daughter?"

"Why else?" was the answering query.

"You entered the house by that window, did you not?"

"Yes."

"You were admitted by a young lady, I think?"

"Yes."

"You remained here with her for quite a time if I mistake not?"

"No longer than to warm myself a little. I had come quite a distance. I was cold, wet, almost sick."

"What did the young lady say to you?"

"She was kind, she urged me to remain and make myself comfortable; but I could not. The sight of her being here, so well housed and clothed, and the thought of my suffering child, who should have been in her place, made me mad. I don't know what I said or did. I must have frightened her sorely, for when I left the room I heard her lock the door behind me as though she feared I should return."

"Where did you go when you left this room?"

"Where?" And the woman smiled bitterly.

"Where, indeed, should I go?" she replied. "What had been my purpose in coming to Ashurst? Why had I dragged my weary limbs through miry roads, through the blinding storm, through the dark night—why, indeed, but because I would see this Edward Aveling, who had brought such misery upon me and mine? I wished to see him face to face. I would charge him with his villainy. I would make him tremble. And I did, sir! I did, for had he seen Death itself enter his chamber that night he could not have been more horror-struck than he was at sight of me."

"I was wild, yet I had sense enough to show him papers, which he snatched at in fury when he saw them, and would have got them had I not fought for their keeping. Then he would coax me, then he tried threats, but I threatened too, and the wretch knew the power I held, for he quailed and trembled before me, he would have fallen at my feet but I laughed at him, and left him, and went out again into the wild stormy night; but that time I did not feel the biting cold, for vengeance kept me warm. My heart glowed like fire in my breast. I knew, or I thought, my time of triumph had come. But it had not. No! I was deceived, the next day I heard Edward Aveling had robbed me of my revenge by quitting the world. Yet the way he left it was so horrible that I found comfort in that, for my own heart was so sore I could not pity him—I rejoiced!"

Upton looked into the speaker's face and saw the gleam of that madness which the woman herself had that evening acknowledged. The recollection of the trials through which she had passed threw her from her mental balance.

She sprang from her chair and with rapid, masculine strides paced up and down the room. In rising she dropped the oil-silk packet, containing other papers beside the one she had given Upton to read.

He gathered them up, and though he knew the woman's eyes were upon him, did not scruple to examine them. One by one he devoured their import, and he wondered at the method the woman's madness had displayed, for every paper fixed Aveling's crime upon him with indisputable proof.

Everything which before had seemed so mysterious to Upton was now made so clear that he wondered he had never guessed this secret.

"I remember the night of the woman's visit, as if it were only yesterday," he murmured. "I remember Aveling's return to town, his plans for the winter, which would keep him at Ashurst. I remember, too, how it galled me to note the steady progress towards reformation which the fellow was then making, for I knew that thereby my own influence over him was waning."

Continuing his reflections Upton remembered how he sat that night after Aveling left him and turned over in his mind various schemes by which he thought he might regain his former ascendancy over the mind and life of his cousin.

He thought next of the following morning, of Aveling's sudden departure during the night, of his unnoticed return, of the attempt upon his own life—all these recollections now swarmed upon Upton's memory and found an easy explanation in the fact that, threatened with public exposure of the most galling kind, he had madly given up the battle; he had abandoned for ever the effort to lead such a life as would atone for his earlier career, and sought in death that oblivion which moral desperadoes ever seek.

Yes, all this was now so clear to Upton's mind that he was forced to exonerate Rachael the Jewess—Rachael Aveling no longer—from all complicity in her husband's fate, he even acquitted her of any secret collusion with her midnight visitant, for he could not but place implicit reliance upon the woman's words. He credited them gladly, for they accorded marvellously well with his own dearest wishes.

Edward Aveling's second marriage was un-

deniably invalid. He had a living wife when he married the second; therefore, she who claimed his name and barred him from the full enjoyment of his estate, was an interloper who had no claim upon either name or fortune. While these thoughts were passing through Upton's mind the woman continued her rapid walk up and down the room.

She was not so unmindful of her companion's movements as not to be aware that he held possession of the packet she had so jealously guarded, yet her mood was such that she cared not at that moment to claim it. She was even conscious, too, that her host looked upon those papers with a covetous eye, and so, under her shaggy brows, she warily watched him lest he might purloin any of the precious documents. Her companion's voice at length brought her mind back to the present.

"Madame," he said, when he saw that her excitement had somewhat subsided, "are you willing that I should guard these papers for a few days. Your daughter's good name demands it. For her sake I ask you to let me examine them more closely. You must let me show them to others. You may trust them in my keeping. I swear I will return them to you without injury."

The woman hesitated for a moment, but reading in Upton's face a confirmation of his words, she at last granted his request.

"Saunders's condition grows more and more favourable every day," remarked one of the physicians at Theobald's Hospital to the superintendent not many mornings after the conversation detailed in a recent chapter. "He seems to have plucked up courage wonderfully during the last few weeks. I think he'll soon be able to receive his discharge."

"Poor fellow!" returned the superintendent. "I shall be half sorry to have him go, for somehow he interests me wonderfully. Do you think he will ever entirely recover from the melancholy produced by the loss of his family?"

"One can't exactly say," answered the physician. "Time is a mercurial agent in such cases. It is a great pity—a great shame—that his relations should be so indifferent. He'll need all the sympathy and help his friends can give him when he goes out into the world again. As it is, he seems entirely alone."

"That letter they wrote shortly after he came here shows what sort of people they are. It was a contemptible ruse of theirs to pretend they supposed the fellow dead and so shift all further responsibility. It's a thousand wonders he didn't die, exposed as he was to the inclemency of the weather that night. I suppose the attendants must have found him shortly after he fell, else he would have been frozen stiff, for not even the fever in his veins could have stood a long exposure. But I'm heartily glad he's coming on so nicely; it's a triumph for Theobald's."

"Have you ever thought," said the superintendent, confidentially, "that to Sister Felicia is due most of the credit of his recovery?"

"I haven't a doubt of it. From the first she seemed to have such a pity for the man that she couldn't help doing something for him, and then, of course, when he opened his eyes and looked at her, he couldn't help becoming interested in so sweet and gentle a nurse, so it has all come out admirably. By the way, who and what is this 'Sister Felicia'? Does anyone really know?"

"Isn't it enough to know that she is simply Sister Felicia? I suppose the old housekeeper from Ashurst could tell a straight enough story about her, but somehow I've been satisfied to take the young lady just as she presented herself. I don't much care who or what she is, provided she will stay with us and continue her wonderful influence in the convalescent ward. She is decidedly the most valuable assistant we have ever had there."

"I am quite as willing as you are to take her upon trust," said the doctor. "I simply asked

the question because I fancied that she and Saunders seem to be thinking more of each other than either is aware."

"Then if that is the case," laughed the other, "it is clearly for our interest to put a stop to anything which will rob us of our pretty nurse. We don't secure desirable attendants to have our convalescents carry them off."

"Ha! there the pair go now!" said the physician, directing his companion's attention to the window, through which two figures were seen moving slowly up and down on the terrace in the early spring sunshine.

It was indeed Rachael and her charge, who were thus fulfilling the promise of pleasant outdoor exercise. The glow of returning health rested on the invalid's pale face; his step was daily becoming more firm; his strength and mental tone were fast being re-established. It appeared, however, as if he were growing better despite himself, and in opposition to his own wishes; for there were times when his old moodiness would seize him still, and at such times death wore a more attractive form than life.

It was mainly because Sister Felicia was so untiring in her efforts in his behalf that he was now so far advanced towards recovery. He seemed drifting on with the flight of time, living in the present, at moments enjoying the charmed influences which surrounded him, and sometimes, though rarely, apparently forgetful of those sadder phases of his life. The nurse who now walked by his side half supported his uncertain steps.

"It is very strange to me to be indebted to a lady for such service," he said, looking down into the bright face beside him with a look of gratitude. "I never expected to reach so helpless a state as this."

"I remember when you were still more helpless," the gentle nurse replied. "Is it not a great gain to be able to be abroad on such a day as this, when a few weeks ago you were too weak to lift your hand to your head?"

A shadow passed over the man's brow, and he said: "That was a sad time," he said. "Yet I doubt if the past is not better worth my contemplation than the future!"

"Ah," replied Rachael, "you must fight such gloomy thoughts. What if there are sorrows in your past life which it appeals you to remember. They were sent by God for some good purpose, and therefore—"

"No!" cried the other, bitterly. "They were not sent by God. I brought them upon myself by my own mad folly, and therefore they are hard—oh! terribly hard—to bear!"

"Then you must bear them still more bravely, and thus make atonement," said Rachael, softly.

She felt the hand upon her arm suddenly tremble, and looking up into the face beside her, noticed that it quivered with some strong feeling.

"You, who are so pure, so innocent, so inexperienced in the world's dark ways, know nothing of the trials, the bitter atonement, which crime entails."

"Do not let a tender conscience exaggerate your faults," the nurse gently said.

"Exaggerate my faults!" he repeated, excitedly. "I loved life as well as any man who possessed much to make life attractive. I wandered far into by and forbidden paths, so far, in truth, that I almost lost the golden thread which would have guided my return. I was suddenly brought face to face with my wretched self; the sight filled me with horror, and I determined to efface the image by a better life. I attempted to reform; but it seemed as though the demons who had had me in their possession so long united their forces to thwart my purpose. Horrible obstacles sprang up in my path to bar my way; for a time I patiently overcame them. I thought that at last I had mastered self, and that by a well-ordered life I could annul the mischief I had wrought; but just when I was the most hopeful, when I felt the strongest and the bravest, the greatest trial came. I could not face that—I tell you frankly, I could not. I turned to fly, but the thought of what I was,

and of what I might become drove me mad. I could strive no longer. I gave up in despair. I—"

"Pray do not think of it any more," Rachael cried, noting the excitement of her patient, and fearing the consequences. "Do not think of it any more. All that is now past and gone. A new life is opening to you. The future is yours; you can make it what you will."

"Yes," the man answered slowly, with desperate earnestness. "The future, I hope, may be mine; but it will be haunted by ghosts from the past which I can never exorcise. I tell you again, you are too pure, too innocent to understand me."

He drew away from her as if he thought she might be contaminated by his presence; but she smiling with reassuring grace, said:

"I think I understand you better than you do yourself. I think I know that what you once may have been you are no longer. What you were I do not care to know. When you came here you were driven to the verge of madness by sorrow—"

"It was remorse! Remorse!" ejaculated the man, between his set teeth.

Rachael resumed:

"Fever ensued, and you were brought very near that grave in which you hoped to find oblivion. But God willed that you should be led away from the tomb with only a look into its ghastly depths. Your body recovered, but your mind refused to accept the boon of returning health! You still cling to that wild longing for death which is the coward's refuge."

She spoke rapidly and eagerly, and with a firmness which was unusual to her. The man looked at her half surprised, yet when he saw the glowing cheek and flashing eye he somehow felt that she had her own griefs as well as he, and that she was thinking of them as well as of him when she spoke.

"Yes," she continued, "it is, indeed, cowardly to fly from life because our own misdeeds appal us, far more cowardly than if we were to hide ourselves from the misery which others bring upon us. God never sends misfortunes so overwhelming, he never permits us to bring upon ourselves sorrows so bitter, but that we may find some way out of them if we are only diligent in searching for that way."

"Ah," Saunders exclaimed, "if you had been by I might have stemmed the tide! But what folly is this that I am uttering? I, who should never again dare look a woman in the face, and covering his face with his hands a deep groan burst from the man's heaving breast.

The nurse looked narrowly at her patient, fearing that their exciting talk had again unsettled his mind.

"Pardon me," he presently said, turning a more composed face towards his companion. "I need not have troubled you with these harrowing reminiscences. Without doubt you also have had your sorrows; you have already done enough for me, I should not burden you with confidences which cannot interest you."

The words which she would have spoken in reply, coming fresh from a warm heart yearning to express its sympathy, would have cheered and strengthened the disconsolate man, but with impatience, almost with rudeness, he turned from her and re-entered the house, leaving her standing surprised and perplexed without.

"It is but a momentary flashing of his old malady," said Rachael to herself, after a pause. "The poor fellow is still bound by the fancies which haunted him during his illness. I did wrong to encourage him to talk upon matters so exciting."

She took one or two more turns upon the sunny terrace, for there were many other thoughts occupying her mind. She knew that her patient would soon leave the institution, the physicians had told her as much, and somehow this information disturbed her.

It was so novel and so sweet a thing for her to feel that she was essential to any human being; it was so delightful to reflect that she had been useful in rescuing a mind from despair, that she regretted a parting which would commit her

charge to other and perhaps less sympathetic influences.

The girl thought her regard for Saunders was only the natural result of the relation which she sustained towards him as his nurse. She did not remember how her heart had many a time been cheered by his welcoming smile when sad thoughts oppressed her; she did not think of the many times she had encountered his look fixed upon her with tender gratitude, nor how at such times there had quivered in her heart a thrill whose meaning she did not comprehend.

As for Saunders himself, he left the young nurse's side in a wild state of feeling which, weak and sick though he was, he knew he must quiet. Sister Felicia's word echoed in his memory in a way he little dreamed of.

Yes, he had been cowardly; he had been blindly groping for a way out of his difficulties, and if by chance he had found it, it seemed to him so grim, so beset with deadly thorns and nettles, that he had scorned, or feared, to walk therein, and so he had chosen one of his own devising which would have ended in an eternity of doom.

He went to his own little chamber, a small apartment which, as an especial favour, had lately been allotted him. The window of this room commanded a view of the country for miles around, the hospital itself being situated upon a considerable eminence. Below, the grounds of the institution lay extended in its piebald covering, half snow and half deadened grass.

The highway wound gracefully along over acclivities and across bridges, reaching on one side to the far distant town, and the other to the limit of the view which Saunders's position commanded, that limit being marked by the blackened gables of Ashurst, which rose grim and dark against the bright, spring sky.

Saunders's gaze turned towards the ruined mansion, and his thoughts took a strange flight as he looked.

(To be Continued.)

PUBLIC AMUSEMENTS.

THE ELEPHANT AND CASTLE THEATRE.

THE pantomime at this theatre is entitled "The Babes in the Wood and the Wicked Uncle; or, Harlequin the Golden Butterfly and the Spider Fiend;" it is entitled to high praise. The first scene is called the Cobweb Cave of the Spider Fiend. In the next scene a view is given of an Apartment in Hardup Hall, the residence of the Wicked Baronet. Lively and mirth-provoking action takes place here. This scene is richly humorous, and when we witnessed it evoked hearty laughter; as did also its sequel, the combat between the two Ruffians, who, disagreeing about slaying the children, have a set-to with each other, fighting, falling, gesticulating, and howling in the drollest manner. The ballet, which takes place in a charming scene called "Butterfly's Haunt in the Glades of Fairyland," and is under the direction of Miss Lizzie Elliott, who, as the chief of the corps, contributed high-class dancing, was exceedingly interesting. The ladies of the ballet were chastely dressed, and a pretty effect was produced by their bending and waving sprays of the blue bells flower; their evolutions were elegant. The Sisters Clarinda (who are two little flaxen-haired clever girls) were deservedly much admired for their dancing and posturing. Black-battle Castle forms scene ninth, and is one of the most perfect castles ever seen upon any stage. Certainly we have never beheld a better one. It is vast, looks showy, and the perspective and colour are admirable. It is a fine specimen of the skill of Mr. J. S. Glenn, the artist. In the courtyard in front of this structure assembles quite a considerable army of Lilliputian warriors, clad in coats of mail, and wearing glittering helmets. They are put through their drill by a precocious Captain smaller than

themselves. Their manoeuvres are executed with marked precision. The castle is stormed, the captive children are set free and taken home, the wicked uncle repents, the ruffians say they have reformed, Walter regains his Mary, and so the story ends. The Transformation, entitled the Valley of Golden Palms, is beautiful. Its principal feature consists of Palm Trees, opening and revealing lovely living beings of the fairy kind. The action was, we have implied, excellent. The Misses Aubrey were charming as the so-called Babes. They sing well, dance well, and act admirably. With the bright girlish manner of the younger of the two we were especially delighted. Miss Dora Flange makes a handsome Fairy King. Miss Agnes Temple is an unpretending but engaging Mary. Miss Manners and Miss Hall were winsome as Papillon and Lady Bird. Messrs. Villiers and Beverley work hard and acceptably as the Ruffians. Their droll doings and merry vocalisation evoked frequent applause.

THE PHILHARMONIC.

A NEW burlesque extravaganza entitled "Lalla Rookh; or, Gaily the Troubadour," is the entertainment here. It is from the pen of Mr. Frank Hall, who has introduced into it much amusing business and many popular tunes. Much taste has been displayed in the production of the piece. The scenery is appropriate and good, and the dresses both of the corps de ballet and the principal performers are elegant. Some of the ladies' dresses are very striking. The performers have been chosen with judgment, are competent and pleasing, and some of them are clever and popular. Miss Frederica, who sustains the character of Lalla Rookh, is in every way a pleasing actress. The dancing of Miss Ida Idalie and Miss Nellie Hawkins, the principal danseuses, formed a commendable feature of the ballet. The extravaganza is a good production of its kind, and highly attractive.

PROMENADE CONCERTS AT THE WESTMINSTER AQUARIUM.

THE Saturday promenade concerts at the Aquarium, which were received with much favour from the first, appear to increase in popularity as they are continued. The new orchestra at the extreme end of the building answers its purpose admirably, and with an efficient band, conducted with great skill by M. Dubois, overtures and operatic selections are given in admirable style, while a pleasing contrast is made by the performances of Mrs. Weldon's choir, that lady also conducting those portions of the concert in which the choir assists. An addition has been made to the list of variety entertainments by the engagement of "Wieland's Zoo," in her intrepid exhibition of extraordinary individuality. Her performances are: 1st. Marvellous exercise on a thread of wire 1-16th of an inch thick. 2nd. Scientific calisthenics. 3rd. Nature's statuary personified. 4th. Angle leap. 5. The new flight. This artist was, on the night of our visit, greeted throughout with hearty applause, especially for her angle leap from the roof of the building, a sight which alone is worth a visit.

DRURY LANE.—The new scene in the "Blue Beard Pantomime" is now the finest and best that has ever been produced on any stage. The motion of the water is gained by coloured canvas which covers the stage, and rolls in so natural a manner as almost to revive certain very unpleasant feelings known to some persons in a rough passage to Margate.

A GALLANT New England knight of the quill describing a country dance, says:—"The glorious strings of glass beads now glisten on the heaving bosoms of the village belles, like rubies resting on the surface of warm apple-dumplings."



[HOPES AND FEARS.]

LAURA;

OR,

THREE DAYS BEFORE THE WEDDING.

CHAPTER II.

"Are you not well, darling?" said Philip Massey, drawing a rustic chair to the side of the low, soft seat occupied by Laura on the terrace.

"I—I have not felt just well to-day," she answered, smiling rather coolly upon his solicitude, and commencing to gather together her scattered drawing materials.

"My dearest girl, take good care of your health; I fear you are careless of cold," tenderly raising the lace shawl which had fallen from her sloping shoulders.

"You have never met my Aunt Mary?" she said, suddenly, and averting her face from his gaze.

"You know I have not, dear." He plucked a double red pink from the rustic hanging basket, and, placing it in her hair, said, "This expresses my sentiments and enhances your beauty."

"So you never knew Aunt Mary?" returning to that subject, to his small surprise.

"Not that I know of. Apropos of that, I know not whose sister your aunt is; is her name White or Jewett?"

"My aunt was my father's step-sister, and her name is Langham."

"Mary Langham!" with great astonishment apparent in his voice.

"Yes; do you know the name?" turning on his face the large, lustrous eyes.

"I have heard it—that is, I knew the name years ago," he returned, and, while tapping his foot in seeming slow carelessness, kept his eyes fixed on the mellow summer landscape spread before him. He saw and noted, while all his thoughts seemed a confusion of brewing trouble, the golden-faced sun kissing the dimples of the fretting river, which, slowly blushing with gladness, reflected for a moment all brightness; then, as slowly, did the sunshine move away to brighten the verdure-clad hill with the same transitory glow, to leave it, after a time, as he had left the now darkened river. And thus it is with life.

"You knew her, then?"

There was a new, sharp tone in Laura's usually smooth voice that seemed to disturb her lover's reverie, for, turning, he scanned her face closely, then said:

"I really fear you are ill, my Laura!"

"I said I did not feel well; but will you tell me," she continued, with quiet persistence, "what you knew of Aunt Mary so long ago?"

"I did not say I knew your aunt. Indeed, I should be sorry if my Mary Langham was your relative;" this to himself, as he bent over her to examine the drawing resting on the easel before her. Her eyes were fixed upon his face, and he

felt almost abashed by their scrutiny; but, feeling the need of breaking the well-nigh awkward silence, and being reassured by a sudden remembrance, he said, coolly, "The lady I knew by that name was born and bred in Jersey; your aunt, I have heard you say, was a Sussex lady."

He spoke as though weary of the subject, and, taking up some engravings from the ground by Laura's side, began to examine them as though deeply interested; but the young lady's first words made him lay them aside hastily, and bite his nether lip furiously.

"My aunt was born in Jersey, and only left there about thirteen years ago, since which time she has resided in Sussex. She adopted an orphan boy there, and has with him lived almost in seclusion all these years. I never saw her except on my two visits to Sussex. You must know she at no time lived with my father. He never forgave his mother for marrying Mr. Langham. He ran away from home, was adopted by his father's people, and I believe never again saw his mother nor the little daughter whom Mr. Langham had by a prior wife. After papa died Aunt Mary wrote to us, and we have become attached through my short visits and our interchange of letters. She is noble and good, but she lives only for her charitable cares and this adopted boy, though he must be seventeen now."

"She—she must be an odd character," was the rejoinder, while mechanically he counted the buds on a spray of honeysuckle he had broken from the vine.

"Do you think she is the one you know, Philip?"

Two small hands clasped his own, and the loveliest golden-brown eyes in the world gazed imploringly into his troubled ones.

"Why darling, why this questioning mood? I tell you that your aunt and my acquaintance could not be the same—could not be!" he repeated, rather gloomily, as though more to reassure himself than his listener. "But tell me," he added, "how you came to be so persistent on this point?"

"I will. This morning I was conversing with Aunt Mary about you. Among other items I mentioned that, by your rightful father, your name was Judson, and—"

"And—" he repeated, while he clenched one hand on the arm of the chair.

"And," continued Laura, steadily, "she, my aunt, who always uses the most simple language, cried out, 'Good heavens! Philip Judson!' She seemed about to swoon; she recovered herself, however, and I followed her into the house. I asked her, implored her, to tell me what in your name had so affected her—"

"And—what did—" he interrupted, eagerly; but Laura heeded not, while her eyes filled with tears.

"I followed her to her room; she would not allow me to stay with her, and only answered me, 'Go, child, and pray that a great blight is not about to overcast your bright life.' And oh! Philip dear, I have waited so impatiently for you to come, to explain; for of course, aunt is the Mary Langham you knew, and there is some mystery between you. I am not inquisitive, but I feel a dreadful tremor at my heart; an inward quaking disturbs me. Oh, Philip, I fear—I fear I know not what!"

The bright head was lowered, and stifled sobs shook the gentle breast and voiced the agony of her spirit.

"My only love"—his voice trembling slightly—"calm yourself, I entreat you. That I should occasion you the least sorrow rends the fibres of my heart. My darling, you have often said that loving as we do, no earthly interference could part our lives; then, my beautiful love, why be sad over chimeras, and why allow vague pressages of evil to afflict your tender heart? Will I allow aught to part us? No! God alone shall do that by—death!"

His voice rose full and clear, and died away with lingering cadence, and, raising her eyes, Laura said, solemnly:

"Yes, I cannot live without you. Death alone will separate us!"

Mary Langham, from her chamber window, saw them as they sauntered away, now lost for a time amid the woven shadows of shade-fleeting trees, anon catching glimpses of the white-robed form and hair that glittered as a golden crown. Again she saw them as they, with hands clasped together, ascended the blossoming ground of the hillside, and stood in the silent splendour of the radiant summit.

"Oh, Heaven," she cried, with uplifted hands and tear-stained eyes, "that this should be! Must I destroy the flush of this sweetness of life, turn vivid dawn into ashen grey?"

She lay with her pale face upturned to the glorious sunshine, and saw that it but smiled on her soul-anguish, and mocked in the robin's song her moans.

"Oh, Heaven, send peace to ease my woe!" And the dallying south wind heard the prayer and wafted away to realms unseen, to the ears of a holy angel, and she listened, and sent tender, pitying words as a message to a burdened heart, and that heart calmed itself, and clothed itself with a sad though serene mantle of duty.

"I am sorry your aunt was too unwell to come to dinner," said Miss Winters, who sat with Mrs. White and her daughter in the cool sitting-room. "Dear me! when I begin to get old I hope my hair will turn all grey at once; it gives one such an interesting appearance while they are still young. Hello, Polly!"

"But, my dear," gently interposed Mrs. White, "this gentleman may be married."

"Married, indeed! I guess not, after the way he has talked to me. I know he meant business. Yes, indeed!" And Miss Winters, with a dignified toss of the head that carried at least the weight of her own conviction, searched in her portmanteau, and, finding a card, handed it with a simper to Mrs. White, then smiled, pretended to be confused, and nervously fingered her rings.

Mrs. White, with a passing smile moving her lips, looked at the card, then passed it to Laura.

"Why, mother, this must be old Mr. Blanchard; his initials are C. D.; and, Miss Winters, he has, I am sorry for your sake to say a wife and five sons."

"Oh, it can't be the same. But if it is—oh, the old hypocritical imbecile, I'll—"

"Break his head!" came fiercely from the enemy, then his shrill "on! on!" followed.

"This will never do, Polly," said Mrs. White, rising. "I shall give your bad teacher keep you away; your surroundings are too refined, I see."

Laughingly the lady raised the heavy cage, and with it left the room.

"How bewitching the twilight hour!" murmured Miss Winters.

Perhaps even her affected mind revered the glory of departing day on sight of that vivid sunset gilding the hill-top with a wreath of ruddy gold, tinging the central depths of the mirror-like waters with a ruby glow, set in a shadowy frame of reflected spirea and flag, and felt the cooling air, fitted for vesper time, loaded with its odour of blooming plant and blossoming shrub as it wandered through the network of clustering vines to caress each opened flower ere it accepted its invigorating nectar, the dew. But afar in the blue firmament a gossamer cloud arises. It was the moon; and the fire-flies danced in and out like sparks of flame; the gloom of the lawn grass and the darkness of evening crept onward.

"I wonder who rang the bell so loudly a minute ago," speculated Miss Winters, to whom the long silence had grown irksome.

"Time to light the gas," said Laura, going to the centre-table and lighting the drop lamp.

She had scarcely lighted it when, the door opening, Mrs. White entered.

"Laura, I—I want you upstairs."

Laura had her face to the light and did not look towards her mother, who stood for a moment with the door ajar.

There was silence for a moment after this, Laura lost in conjectures as to what her mother and Philip could have to say together to her exclusion, and Miss Winters wondering why Mrs. White did not come to release her daughter.

"Laura, you may be satisfied with one thing, that is, that all your dresses are cut after the latest French models, so they will be good next year," in a decisive and half consolatory tone.

"Oh, but I shall wear them all out this year," answered Laura, lightly, drawing to the door a chair, in which she seated herself with a laugh at the odd mode of carrying on conversation through the key-hole. "Oh, Miss Winters," as with affected mannerism of vanity she spread out the trail of her satin dress; "I have on the skirt of my wedding-dress; I want mamma to see it."

"Oh, my! Mr. Massey, too, may like to see you in it."

"Think, I'll fasten the veil on," taking the misty lace from its box, and arranging it on her lovely head.

"Laura, what would you do if Mr. Massey should die?" inquired the heartless woman.

"Mercy! What a question!" cried Laura, faintly. Then, becoming a trifle displeased, she said, "I do not like you to say such things."

"But riding so much he is likely to meet with an accident and die, you know," persisted the tormentor, inwardly congratulating herself upon her adroit breaking of the news.

"Tell me, tell me! Those wild horses!" incoherently cried Laura, while she vainly rattled and pulled at the door-handle.

"Hush! sweet! He may not die!" whispered Miss Winters.

Immediately after she heard a gasping sigh and fall, and, somewhat frightened, she hastily left the door and started to call Mrs. White. She encountered that woman on the stairs, just ascending to impart the painful news which could no longer be kept back from her child.

"Laura, I think, has swooned!"

"Woman!" cried Mrs. White, in terrified accents. "You surely could not be so cruel as to tell Laura!"

"I did my duty, madame," said Miss Winters, stiffly, going into her room and slamming the door after her.

But Mrs. White had no thought for her. She opened the door with trembling hands. Laura lay on the floor, all the misty finery enveloping her form, and scarcely whiter than her face. She unclosed her eyes as the mother bent over her.

"I feel dizzy," she moaned. "But, mamma, she—she frightened me so! She—"

"Yes, love, we will talk of what she said when you are better."

"But she said Philip was downstairs!"

"So he is, my dear; he does not feel well—"

"He does not feel well—Oh mother, mother! What—is it?" gasped the white lips.

"You are too frightened, child; he had a little fall, that's all—"

The eyes were veiled a moment by their delicate lids, then, opening, fastened such an eager, searching gaze into the mother's face that she looked away with a troubled countenance, and eyes that forced back rising tears.

"Help me, mamma!" she said, faintly. "I will go to Philip."

"But, my love, you are weak; you cannot walk," interposed the mother, crying softly now as she smoothed the folds of satin.

"I—do not know why, but I seem to have little power of movement; but where Philip is I must go, were it miles and miles!"

Without another word the mother assisted her to her feet, and with an arm clasped about her led her from the room.

"I declare she is going to see him!" muttered Miss Winters, as she softly opened the door and peeped into the passage. "Now will be a good

time for me to go to her room, get that cream-coloured silk, bring it here and try it on. Oh, bother! I have no pier glass in my room; but never mind; if I hear no one coming I can steal again to Laura's room; anyone meeting me will take me for a beautiful, wandering spirit."

"Too bad for the poor gentleman and Miss Laura, too!" sighed a sympathetic servant to her crying companion, where they sat on the wide stairs, watching every move of the sitting-room door.

"What did the doctor say, Delia?" inquired the other woman, as she wiped her eyes on the corner of her apron.

"Yes, girl, quick! What did he say?"

Looking up from whence came the voice, they saw, standing at the head of the staircase, a woman in a long, trailing gown of black, with only a pallid face and streaming, snowy hair to relieve the sombre picture.

"He said, Miss Langham, that his injuries was fatally internal ones."

"Ha! Will he—die?"

"In a few hours at mostways," sobbed the girl.

"Man proposes, God disposes; had I but waited, my letter need never have been written, but I must get it now."

Thus mentally said Miss Langham, as she moved noiselessly along the passage. A light glimmered through the crevice of the nearly closed door, and which Miss Langham pushed open. To her surprise the room was occupied. A lady stood directly under the chandelier, a light silken robe tossed over her arm, while she very busily scanned the contents of a letter which she held before her.

One glance only did Mrs. Langham bestow, then, with the quickness of righteous wrath, she glided to the other's side, snatched the letter from the unresisting hands, and stood with her figure erect and drawn to its fullest height, looking down with withering scorn in her dark, blazing eyes. But she uttered no words, only by arm upraised pointed to the door with an air of tragic command, and Miss Winters, feeling as despicable as was in her nature to feel, went.

Miss Langham for a moment stood motionless, with clasped hands and pale, tightly compressed lips.

"I reap the wages of sin," she muttered, brokenly, and the sad eyes were filled with unshed tears. "Death to worldly pride—death to ambition—death to respect—death to love! Such have been to me the fruits of sin. But see," her eyes fixed upon the letter which she held, "that woman could not decipher my crumpled handwriting—she only saw the first page, and that tells little, Thank Heaven. It is well for my child's sake that she knows not. Poor little Laura; how did this woful tale affect her? Would that I could have spared the added bitterness to her sorrow of this night! But one knows not what is best. Poor girl! how dreadful it must have sounded to her innocent ear! To learn that Harry, my adopted son, as she has always supposed, is Philip Judson's son and mine—born out of wedlock—must have been a crushing blow indeed!"

"Mary, I have been calling for you; come—Philip is—dying, and he has asked for you!"

Aroused from her silent trance of remembrance, Miss Langham looked inquiringly but with unmeaning stare into Mrs. White's tear-stained face; but on the repetition of the request, and noting the other's sobs, understanding came to her bewildered senses, and whilst shuddering through all her frame she said, sadly:

"Dying—poor child!"

"Oh, my poor, gentle Laura!" cried Mrs. White, throwing herself on a lounge and giving way unreservedly to her grief.

"Is she calm?" asked Mary, moistening her lips, which seemed too stiff and dry for movement.

"Oh, yes, wofully calm; she has not shed a tear; he can speak but little, and she lies quietly by his side. But come."

Tightly compressing her burning lips, Miss Langham crushed the letter which she still held into her pocket, and, following Mrs. White, descended the stairs. Yes, that he was dying was plain to be seen. The doctor and Mr. Maldon stood by the table, and cast sympathising glances on the pair; on him, in all his grand beauty of manly strength lying there, awaiting, without thought of resistance, the near moment when the strong though misty wings of the death angel should waft away his feeble breath.

And she, in all the loveliness of shining, pure white raiment, with only the colour of glittering hair, dishevelled now, and trailing over the dress, over the bed and over his breast, rested her beautiful face near his, and with her two white arms laid across his body tried to guard him against the keen arrow of the archer, death.

Poor little arms! love was their only strength, and who does not know that the Ruler of life joys to take those whose life is joyous? The grave's dark shadow saddened and dimmed the clearness of life's skies for all in that dread presence, as their hearts beat with a responsive thrill to the moan of unutterable agony that passed the prostrate girl's lips.

Mary Langham stood by that low bed.

"Philip," she said at last, with mouth that vainly tried to cease its quivering.

"Mary"

He unclosed the eyes over which the film of death had already spread his mist, and spoke in a voice whose weak, sad tone caused Mrs. White to sob aloud. Miss Langham knelt by his side and bent her face close to his.

"Forgive," he only murmured, and closed the dark eyes wearily.

For answer she bent her face nearer and let her cold lips for a moment rest on his dewy forehead, and then, with white, impassive face, arose from her knees and moved to the dark corner where she seated herself.

"My darling one," faintly whispered the dying accents, "come nearer; I cannot see your face."

Silently the girl laid her cheek close to his, and clasped him nearer with the young arms.

"I will meet you there, darling—soon—we"—he gasped, as though for breath—sighed deeply, "we—united there—" clutched a tress of the hair trailing over his hands, grasped it, tried to raise it to his lips, but failed—"there—soon."

And the lips for ever ceased their melody and set stiffly; he turned the glassy eyes in one last look on her, then the lids quivered restlessly and were stilled; and all was silence, for the king was nigh.

"Dead! Oh, my love, dead!" cried Laura, in a frantic voice. "Oh, take me, too! Let us die together in the sunlight of love—oh, let him not go alone—in life one, in death not divided!"

The voice died away in a sighing wail, then, with a lingering look of touching earnestness into the dead white face, she sank by his side with a heavy moan.

The lethargy which sometimes chains the senses of people, spectators of a trying scene, claimed all the occupants of this death-room; but now, with that ringing knell of heart-grief, the chain binding them seemed riven. Mrs. White, with a loud cry, hastened to her daughter's side, then, with the doctor's assistance, succeeded in carrying her to her chamber.

During the whole long night Laura revived from one swoon but to drop off into another; but towards morning, when the anxious mother gladly hailed the first pinkish streaks tinging the grey horizon, she awoke to sensibility. Mrs. White, who had never left the bedside for hours, hung over the weak girl, and sobbed out her gratitude that her only child was recovering. Laura's eyes were turned on her face with dumb, sad questioning.

"Dear, he will remain here," the mother answered to the unspoken inquiry.

"Ah!"

For a season respiration was laborious, but after a time became less distressing to the

mother's ear, and, sighing wearily, she turned her face to the wall and moved not again.

All day she lay motionless, while the robin, stretching and pluming his feathers and wings, sang his summer-day song, and sunbeams spread over the earth and bade the bud bloom to perfect flower, and knew not that behind the lace-screened windows a sweet-souled floweret was mourning over death's sad power.

Only once, on Mrs. White's piteous entreaty, did Laura allow a taste of nourishment to pass her lips during the day. The doctor called several times, but while he remained in the room she kept her face turned away and heeded him not. But towards night she seemed to sleep, and the mother for a time went to seek needed repose, leaving Miss Winters sitting by Laura's bedside, and promising that on the least perceptible movement or change in her charge she would call Mrs. White.

"Dear me!" grumbled the watcher. "This house is very stupid. It is just too mean! Here I came for a wedding, and I only enjoy a funeral and illness. I am sorry for Laura's disappointment in not getting married; now if he had only waited until after the ceremony, I expect she could bear his death with becoming equanimity; but dying just on the eve of marriage would try any young girl's composure. Heigh-ho, I am exceedingly tired. I begin to feel that the day has too many waking hours for my—no, not my years, but constitution, which is frail." Settling herself comfortably on the lounge, she continued her ruminating: "Perhaps I can sleep and recuperate for the ordeal of the burial. Dear me! how exciting it would have been to go to that hotel in town in the role of mourner! But they decided to bury him from here. Well, I will sleep—it is such a trouble to think; anything else is preferable—"

A movement from the bed was unnoticed by Miss Winters; she was already sleeping the easy sleep of the untroubled. A stifled moan, a seeming groping about in the dim light of the room, then a patter of dainty feet, and the creak of the door opening, and all was still but for the loud breathing of the sleeping woman.

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"Dear me!" I did sleep," muttered Miss Winters, as, rising to a sitting posture, she yawned lazily. "Ah," as she stood under the chandelier and held her watch up to the light. "I have slept over an hour; think I will call Mrs. White. It is very selfish of her to leave me alone in this dismal chamber." Then, her eyes alighting on the bed, she saw the crumpled coverlet turned back, and walked nearer to assure herself that there was no one there. "Oh! oh!" she screamed, loudly, rushing out into the hall way, then beginning to beat with her two hands in a frantic manner against the nearest door.

Almost immediately the door opened, and Miss Langham calmly asked the cause of all this commotion.

"Oh, oh," was all Miss Winters uttered, but Mary Langham pushed her aside and hastened into Laura's room.

By this time Mrs. White, being aroused, joined the group in the entry, augmented by several servants, who had heard Miss Winters' screams. One look into Miss Langham's haggard face, as she met Mrs. White running into Laura's room, told what she had surmised—that Laura was not there.

With one accord they descended the stairs, and the sobbing servants and Miss Winters stood back while Miss Langham, preceded by the unnerred parent, pushed open the sitting-room door.

All was dark save for the bright illumining of the moon. In the centre of this pale light stood the appalling, black-draped bier on which rested the still body of Philip Massey. Close, down on the floor, partly lying on the sombre draperies, was Laura. The free moonbeams sported amid her loosened hair, gave to the thin white form an added length, and to the calm face a deadly hue. Tenderly they raised the weary head and tried to bring warmth to the cold limbs.

But they laboured without result; for that night, as the stars had appeared one by one on their blue scroll, grim death had pressed her to his clammy breast; he had pressed his seal upon the fair forehead, and she had folded her hands passively over the heart which held no more of life, and gone his willing, ay, happy victim. Gone to the land of celestial bowers, to live a life beyond the narrow earth, where love endures for ever.

She rested on her virgin bier beside him, even in the grave, for they were buried together on the morn that was to have been the bridal day.

Miss Langham shed tender tears over the double grave, made green by the breath of summer and fragrant by fair, pure lilies that brightened the grassy mound. And the bereaved mother, calmly, in silent prayer, mused upon her child's peaceful rest, that repose in which no unrest of life's strife mingled, and her grief was devoid of gloom. H. E.

FACETIE.

SCOTCH FOLK LORE.

OLD LADY: "I dinna ken what ails folk that folk canna like folk as folk should like folk; for an folk liked folk as folk should like folk, folk would like folk as well as folk ever liked folk sin' folk war folk." —Fanny Folks.

"SWEET SIMPLICITY."

DR. SQUILLS: "You need not cry, my little man, because your sister has the measles. She will soon be better."

PRACTICAL CHILD: "Boo-hoo! I ain't erasing 'cos she got 'em; it's 'cos I might catch 'em." —Fun.

AGREED.

OLD PROST: "What I say is this, sir: I approve entirely of foxhunting as a manly, health-giving, and invigorating amusement, but not as a pursuit, sir."

IRISH DOCTOR: "Faith, ye'll find manny 't agree with ye there. Especially foxes." —Fun.

ONE FOR JOHN CHINAMAN.

(Overheard at a restaurant.)

LOQUACIOUS LADY: "And you Chinamen actually eat rice with chopsticks? How very funny!"

CHINAMAN: "You tinkee so?"

L. L.: "Of course! Why, we use a spoon."

C.: "So diddee we; madame, long 'go, when Chinese muchee barbarian too!" —Fanny Folks.

INGENIOUS EXPEDIENT.

SARAH ANN, whose education has been neglected, gets the postman to read her lover's letter to her; but takes a precaution to prevent his hearing what it is all about by putting her hands over his ears. —Fanny Folks.

THE HEIGHT OF SENTIMENTALITY.

GWENDOLINE: "But how sad and wau your cousin is!"

ALGERNON: "Sad! Ya-as; phenomenon of sensibility. Would go into mourning for a dead leaf." —Fanny Folks.

JUDGING BY APPEARANCE.

OLD SCOTCH WIFE: "Loah me! There's a man drinkin' out o' twa bottles at once!" (An old gentleman was trying a new binocular, a present for his nephew.) —Punch.

BREAKING THE ICE.

GALLANT COLONEL (who has been made a grandfather, and can talk of nothing else): "Do you take any interest in very young children, Miss Crauncher?"

MISS CRAUNCHER: "I louthe all children!" —Punch.

HOSPITALITY.

DOCTOR: "Manage to keep yourself alive, eh?"

PATIENT: "It's as much as I can do."

DOCTOR: "Well, you know where to find me. Always glad of a call."
(Exit humming.)

—Judy.

NEW LEAVES.

THE annual ceremony of turning over a new leaf on the commencement of a new year took place on Twelfth Night, with the customary solemnities. The scene was simple, but impressive. The Great Book of 1880, sumptuously bound and emblazoned, was borne in on the shoulders of the oldest inhabitants, and its pages, vast, white, and immaculate, opened on the outstretched wings of a resplendent golden eagle, supported on either side by Britannia and a yeoman of the guard.

A flourish of trumpets sounded as each member of the noble company rose from his seat, advanced to the Eagles, and, with grave deliberation, turned over a leaf, and inscribed thereon, one, two, or three promises and engagements for the current year. The number is thus limited that the burden of responsibility may not be insupportable. We can only select a few examples of the new leaves turned over in the Book of 1880.

The Sultan: "I will reform, and be a better sovereign. I will do all Sir Henry Layard tells me. I will never again put the British Fleet to the inconvenience of steaming up the Dardanelles."

Emperor of Russia: "I will not be embarrassed and impoverished by more wars, conquests, or armed expeditions. I will try the experiment of a Representative Government. I will shut up Siberia."

The Three Emperors: "We will keep up very small armies, just sufficient for garrison duties. We will form a Holy Alliance of Peace with one another, and of good-will towards all sovereigns and peoples."

France: "We will be a moderate, patient, and, in fact, model Republic."

Egypt: "We will pay our debts. If our new Khedive is not strong enough, we will put Gordon Pasha in his place."

United States: "We will go for Free Trade. We will send Mr. Farnell about his business. We will be better friends with John Bull than ever."

South African Colonists: "We will pay the Zulu bill."

Earl of Beaconsfield: "I will not devise so much employment for Her Imperial Majesty's land force. As an agreeable variation, I will attend to domestic legislation—though, as one seriously meditating speedy dissolution, I can't be expected to attend much to such a trifling matter."

Chancellor of the Exchequer: "I will bring forward an early Budget. I will not leave heavy bills for my successor to pay. I will do my best not to increase the Income-tax."

Mr. Gladstone: "I will contract my correspondence. I will shorten my speeches. I will take office with Lord Granville and Lord Hartington, if needful."

Mr. Mackonochie and other Ritualists: "We will remember that we are Ministers of the Reformed Church of England. We will obey the law. We will not tout for Popery."

Home-Rule M.P.'s: "We will do all we can to stop agitation, and prevent lawlessness in Ireland. We will be good boys next Session."

The City Companies: "We will not have more than four great dinners a year. We will spend a million of money on Technical Education. We will unite with the Corporation of London in soliciting a Royal Commission of Inquiry."

Proctors for Convocation: "We will talk less. We will do more. Better, perhaps, than either—we will not meet at all."

"George Eliot: "I will write another novel like 'The Mill on the Floss.'"

Mr. Punch (doubtful whether it is not all a dream): "I can't be better, but I'll try to be as good as ever." —Punch.

By imparting our griefs we halve them; by communicating our joys we double them.

STATISTICS.

STATISTICS OF LONDON AND SUBURBAN CHURCHES.—The fourteenth edition of "Mackeson's Guide to the Churches of London and its Suburb," supplies information as to 872 churches in London and within a radius of twelve miles; but as the particulars are not complete in every case, the number for statistical purposes is corrected to 864. There is a daily celebration of the Holy Communion in 43 churches, or one in every twenty; weekly celebration in 409, nearly one-half; early celebration in 478, more than one-half; choral celebration in 125, one-seventh; and evening celebration in 262, nearly one-third. There is daily service in 245 churches, more than one-fourth; service on Saints' days in 417, nearly one-half; but 134 churches, nearly one-sixth, have no service on week days. The service is fully choral in 275 churches, nearly one-third, and partly choral in 267, nearly one-third; the choir is surplined in 375, three-sevenths; there is a paid choir in 210, nearly one-fourth; a voluntary choir in 388, nearly three-sevenths; and the Gregorian Tones are used in 120, one-seventh.

THE BEST HELPER.

Yes! plenty of good advice and praise,
I got from the world in early days;
"I must be patient, and soon my name
Would bring me pounds and golden fame."

"But while I am waiting, my friends,"
I said,

"What shall I do for my daily bread?"
The world smiled pleasantly—"Sing
your song.
Money and fame will be yours ere long."

I should have starved without a doubt,
But a kindly helper found me out;
An excellent friend with a brave, strong
heart,
Who always zealously took my part.

This friend is good for my clothes and food,
Is true to me always in every mood,
Has found me a home that is still and fair,
And taught me to look for happiness there.

In grief or joy I'm never alone,
This one true friend is always at home,
There's one purse sure, on which I depend,
One heart I never can long offend.

"Who is this helpful person?" you say—
"That has made you strong from day to day."

I myself, am this excellent heart;
There is no-one better to take my part.

B. R.

A SERIES of ballad concerts, at which a number of London artists will appear, has been organised by a committee of gentlemen in Paris. Madame Sinco will be the star of the first concert, and this will be her first appearance in Paris.

A CONTEMPORARY alluding to the London man says:—"We are reminded by it of a Lincolnshire legend to the effect that while the people of a Fenland town were picking their way to church one Sunday morning in the days previous to the advent of Macadam, a man's hat was seen lying in the middle of the highway. On being picked up with some difficulty, the head of the proprietor was discovered beneath, and the unfortunate man, while an attempt was made to rescue him, exclaimed, 'Hold hard! There is a horse and cart under me yet.'"

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

PEPPERMINT WATER.—Take of the dried herb of peppermint one and a half pound, and as much water as will prevent it from burning. After seething over the fire, distil off a gallon, and bottle for use.

APPLE MARMALADE.—Peel and core two pound of apples, and put them into an enamelled saucepan with half a pint of white wine and one pound of powdered loaf sugar. Stew them over a slow fire until the fruit is very soft, and squeeze it through a hair sieve. If not sufficiently sweetened, add sugar to taste and put away in jars. It may be afterwards eaten with milk or cream.

TO TAKE STAINS OUT OF CLOTH, SILK, &c. To two ounces spirits of wine add an ounce of French chalk and five ounces of tobacco pipe-clay, both in fine powder. Make it into rolls about the length of a finger, and let them dry. Apply either dry or wet, and afterwards brush the part. We would advise you to brush the coat with soft soap dissolved in warm water, brush it over with clear, luke-warm water, to take out the soap, and then dry. We have seen scarlet cloth cleaned in this manner most successfully.

TO MAKE POTTED BEEF.—Salt two or three pounds of lean beef for two or three days with common salt. Divide it in pieces of half a pound each, and put it in a pan large enough to contain it. Pour in half a pint of water, and cover it close with paste, and set it in a slow oven for four hours. When taken from the oven, pour off the gravy, pound the meat fine, moisten it with the gravy, and pound it in a mortar with fresh butter. When it has become a fine paste, season with pepper and allspice, put it into pots, cover with clarified butter, and tie down.

MISCELLANEOUS.

AN order has been received in Portsmouth garrison announcing that as the Commander-in-Chief had had his notice called to the fact that non-commissioned officers and privates had been in the habit of wearing crape on their arms at funerals, such practice is, by the Duke of Cambridge's orders, to be immediately discontinued.

POLITICAL joking at the expense of the great spendthrift in postage-cards is heard at most of the theatres in the Christmas fun. At the Alhambra says young Rothamago to his father, "Mr. Gladstone says—" "Oh, don't tell me what he says," replies the parent, "tell me something he does not say." At which a roar of laughter goes up from the audience.

THE new penny postage stamp has been issued. It is red, but not of the old dull brick-red colour, and the Queen's head and bust—especially the latter—show very clearly. To prevent people spending a shilling's worth of time in attempting to make a penny stamp pass muster again, the colour is "fugitive," and servants sent to post letters will probably be cautioned against taking off the colour as well as the gum. Messrs. De la Rue are the contractors for the new stamp, which, not being steel-engraved, is produced at a less cost than the old one.

EPSON'S telephone has, it is said, been successfully used over a line of 2,000 miles in length. A hunting-party in Nebraska were thus enabled to converse with perfect distinctness with their friends in Pennsylvania, via Chicago and the Western Union Telegraph Company's line.

THERE ought to be an Act of Parliament to alter the name of a certain parish in Norfolk. It is too bad that any parish should be called Great Snoring to the end of time. A paragraph of news under that heading is quite startling to readers unfamiliar with the name, and how must the poets of Great Snoring feel when asked for their address.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

ROB ROY.—The treatment of bronchitis varies according to its nature and the constitution of the patient, and the necessity of always having recourse to a medical man cannot be too strongly insisted upon. The great object of the treatment is to reduce and remove the inflammatory condition of the organs, hence in severe cases a mustard poultice is applied to the chest, the feet bathed in warm water, and warm diluent drinks, as barley water or linseed tea, given.

BEATRICE L.—Upon the wisdom of your accepting the young man we have not the means of forming an opinion. But we do not think your course wise in allowing matters to go so far without acquainting your friends. You owe it to those who have brought you up, and who, it is to be presumed, care for your welfare, to inform and consult them before committing yourself to acceptance. We do not wish to discourage you at this stage, but we do think that such a course is not a good beginning of a life that ought to have mutual confidence in the home as one of its chief delights.

E. P. T.—The meaning of the expression "Above the salt," means at the upper end of the table, or among the superior guests, or in a position of honour. The phrase comes from an old custom, in houses of people of rank, of placing a large salt-cellar near the middle of a long table, and assigning to the more distinguished guests the places above the salt-cellar, while the places below it were given to inferiors, dependants, and poor relations.

B. P.—Let him furnish you with his references, and then investigate them thoroughly.

WILLIAM S.—The author has dealt with "Rob Roy Macgregor" as he finds it related in Scottish histories.

FRANCESE.—You cannot do better than use Mrs. S. A. Allan's "World's Hair Restorer" for your hair. This application, which is not a dye, has been in use for the last thirty years, is considered to be one of the best preservatives of the hair, and a stimulant to its growth. With its use oil or pomade is not requisite.

SUFFERER.—It should be obvious to you that we cannot reply in print to questions of a medical nature such as you propound, and as you give neither name nor address we cannot answer you by post. Go to a doctor.

TITUS.—Any Latin dictionary will give you the information you desire.

L. J.—1. Apply personally at the registry office in your district, where all information will be given to you without publicity. 2. A license obtained at Doctor's Commons costs altogether about £2; a special license, obtained at the Faculty Office, Doctor's Commons, costs £29 8s. 3. You can sue for any money owing to your wife before marriage, providing the debt has been acknowledged by one or more payments within six years.

M. J. W.—We refer you to Burns' poems and Scotch authors generally.

ROLLINS STONE.—1. You can buy cod liver oil at a good fishmonger's cheaper than you can make it. It is made by placing the livers in a basin in an oven, and expressing the oil. 2. If your copper is made of iron, dissolve half an ounce of camphor in one pound of hog's lard; take off the scum, rub it over your copper, leave it for twenty-four hours, and then rub it off with a cloth.

GEORGE S.—We can give you no further information than that which the article affords. The description of the contrivance is so plain and lucid that we think your better half, if you have one, could easily manage it.

NELLY & SHORECLIFFE.—1. See answer to "Miss Zoe," in our last week's issue. 2. Oatmeal and water, or a little soft soap; if the latter, afterwards apply a little vinegar.

W. B. G.—To clean the keys of a pianoforte, first wash the keys well with soap applied on a piece of flannel, then with the same flannel wipe it off. When perfectly dry apply powdered and calcined pumice stone in paste. Allow it to remain on wet for some days. If possible, expose them to the sun, under a glass. This will bleach them perfectly white; then wipe off. The browner the keys the longer the process must be.

HORACE.—You are right with regard to the words set and sit, although the popular notion is against you. It is incorrect to say a setting hen, or a hen sets. It should be a sitting hen, and a hen sits.

ROSE.—There is no need to have a positive opinion on the subject, as nothing is immediately dependent on the point, and you can be very useful to the race, or at least that part of it immediately around you, by an impartial and effusive benevolence.

JAMES S., twenty, a seaman in the Royal Navy, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady about nineteen.

T. G. M., twenty, fair, brown eyes, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young lady about nineteen.

SUSAN W., twenty, fair, light hair, dark eyes, wishes to correspond with a gentleman about twenty-two. Tradesman preferred.

NED AND CHARLES, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies residing in Lancaster. Both are twenty.

CASSIE AND EMILY, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. Cassie is fair, of a loving disposition. Emily is dark, fond of music.

EVA AND JESSIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. Eva is eighteen, fair, of a loving disposition. Jessie is twenty, loving, dark hair and eyes.

ROSAMOND AND ANNIE, two friends, wish to correspond with two gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Rosamond is twenty-two, fair. Annie is twenty-two, medium height. Respondents must be about twenty-seven, tall, loving, dark, fond of home.

SHUT THE DOOR.

There's an enemy about;
Shut the door;
Keep the rash intruder out;
Shut the door.
If an entrance he should win
Greater troubles would begin;
To encourage him is sin;
Shut the door.

Least temptations prove too strong,
Shut the door;
Lest you yield to doing wrong,
Shut the door.
While inclined to virtue's way
E'en her slightest hint obey;
There is danger in delay;
Shut the door.

'Gainst the evils that approach,
Shut the door;
That no foes may e'er encroach,
Shut the door.
That around the dear fireside,
With its ample cheer supplied,
Peace and comfort may abide,
Shut the door.

When your adversaries plead,
Shut the door;
That you may not hear or heed,
Shut the door.
For so closely they pursue
There is no escape for you;
But there's one thing you can do,
Shut the door.

Do not wait to be advised;
Shut the door;
Do not wait to be surprised;
Shut the door.
Every moment that you balt
Will encourage an assault;
That you may not be in fault,
Shut the door.

J. P.

C. J. and L. E., two friends, wish to correspond with two gentlemen with a view to matrimony. C. J. is dark, fond of music, medium height. L. E. is fair, fond of children, loving.

JENNY AND MARGERY, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Jenny is eighteen, dark hair, brown eyes. Margery is eighteen, brown hair, dark blue eyes. Respondents must be between nineteen and twenty-three.

W. P. G., twenty-seven, good-looking, dark, would like to correspond with a lady about twenty-four with a view to matrimony.

M. W., twenty-one, dark hair, blue eyes, handsome, medium height, would like to correspond with a good-looking young lady.

ROSE AND BERTHA, sisters, would like to correspond with two gentlemen. Rose is nineteen, tall, brown hair, hazel eyes. Bertha is of medium height, fond of home and music, light hair, dark eyes. Respondents must be between twenty and twenty-two.

L. G. L., a seaman in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with a young lady about eighteen, fond of home and children, dark.

ALFRED W., twenty-three, loving, fair, medium height, blue eyes, would like to correspond with a young lady about eighteen, brown hair, dark eyes, good-looking, and domesticated.

M. L. W., twenty-two, a seaman in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with a young lady about twenty-one.

W. O. and POLLY, two friends, would like to correspond with two seamen in the Royal Navy. W. O. is nineteen, medium height, dark curly hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition.

CLARICE and CLARISSA, two friends, would like to correspond with two gentlemen twenty-one and twenty-seven. Clarice is twenty-four, dark, and fond of home. Clarissa is nineteen, fair, good-tempered, thoroughly domesticated.

GEORGINA M., eighteen, blue eyes, medium height, fair, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty, dark.

TED, HARRY, and WALTER, three friends, would like to correspond with three young ladies. Ted is twenty, fair, medium height. Harry is twenty-three, blue eyes, tall, of a loving disposition. Walter is twenty-three, tall, fair, blue eyes, fond of home and children. Respondents must be eighteen and twenty-two.

FLORENCE, twenty-one, loving, dark, and good-looking, would like to correspond with a seaman in the Royal Navy, about twenty-three.

LIZZIE, twenty-one, medium height, fair, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young man about the same age.

J. M. E., twenty-seven, fair, good-looking, a mechanic, would like to correspond with a young lady about twenty-three with a view to matrimony.

VIOLET and MOLLY, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. Violet is twenty-one, of a loving disposition, tall, dark, fond of home. Molly is nineteen, loving, fair, domesticated.

LILLIE and EVELYN, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. Lillie is nineteen, loving, fond of home, fair. Evelyn is twenty, tall, brown hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition. Respondents must be about twenty-five, dark.

A. W., twenty-one, domesticated, dark hair and eyes, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about the same age.

EDITH and VIOLET, two friends, would like to correspond with two gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Edith is twenty, loving. Violet is eighteen.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

LIZZIE is responded to by—Jack, twenty-four, dark, medium height.

LOUIE by—Joe, twenty-four, dark, tall.

HENRY by—Lily, twenty-two, fair, brown hair, fond of dancing, domesticated.

T. H. by—Pat, twenty-two, fair, grey eyes, of a loving disposition.

M. M. by—E. S., twenty-two, of a loving disposition, medium height.

JOHN by—K. P., twenty-one, loving, fair.

FRANK by—Violet, twenty-one, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of music and dancing, medium height, good-looking.

HANRY M. by—Dora, nineteen, dark, curly hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition.

JOE by—S. T., seventeen, tall, fair, of a loving disposition.

ROGER by—Anne, eighteen, fond of children, dark, and domesticated, loving.

EDITH by—Andrew, twenty-one, fond of children, fair, medium height.

MADE by—Alex, twenty, dark, loving.

MADE by—James, twenty-four.

ROSE by—Henry, twenty-two, medium height, fond of music, dark.

D. G. W. by—W. B.

ELLA by—Thomas E., twenty-three, dark; and by—George, twenty-three, fond of children, tall, fair.

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